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FRANKLIN FOER

CAN JOHN KERRY SAVE HIMSELF?
RYAN LIZZA

SPECIAL *Fall Books Issue*
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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The Case Against George W. Bush: Part III

Legend in His Own Mind

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BUSH PHOTO BY RON EDMONDS/AP

THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

OCTOBER 11, 2004 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,682 VOLUME 231

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CORRESPONDENCE

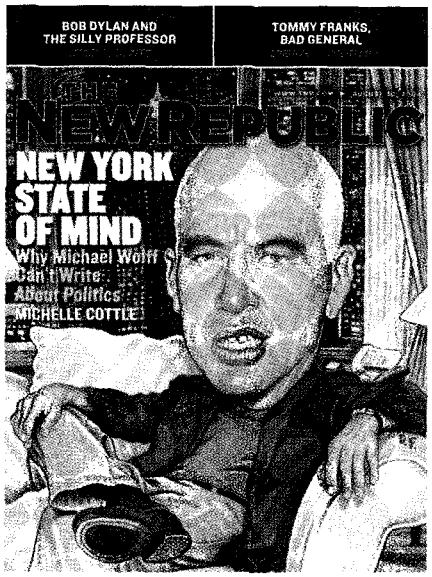
BAD APPLE

MICHELLE COTTLE'S INCISIVE dissection of Michael Wolff makes mention of my own encounters with Wolff, master of the drive-by profile, a form of pseudo-journalism in which no one is interviewed—not even the subject ("Wolff Trapped," August 30). In a world of doubt about the media, perhaps my experiences with Wolff's rules of engagement—or lack of them—can help explain how a few bad actors are damaging a profession that should be honored, not reviled.

About two years ago, my firm invited Wolff to interview Rupert Murdoch at our off-the-record media conference. Wolff was also invited as our guest to a private, off-the-record dinner with our speakers, many of them prominent media and communications chief executives. Wolff repaid our courtesy by writing a column that ignored all of the ground rules—perfectly conventional ground rules that every other participating journalist agreed to and respected. Greater duplicity lay just ahead. Wolff had lunch with one of our conference coordinators and pumped him for information about the conference, all in casual conversation, without mentioning that this might be written about again. He even asked for a tape of his off-the-record interview with Murdoch without any mention of his real agenda. Around the same time, my wife and I had a book party for a former colleague of mine from *The New York Times*, a friend of 30 years' standing, who, in turn, invited his friends. Like most book parties, everyone—including us—believed they were attending a private social event.

Imagine the surprise when Wolff's book (unread and unbought by me and most others) turned out to be built around our off-the-record conference and a book party to which he was invited as a guest of the author. Even the most private and casual conversations that Wolff had with conference organizers were apparently fair game for the book. The guests at the book party were equally stunned to find great detail about what they thought was a purely social event.

Wolff also used his son as a legman, writing in his book about play dates that


BOB DYLAN AND THE SILLY PROFESSOR
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NEW YORK STATE OF MIND
Why Michael Wolff Can't Write About Politics
MICHELLE COTTLE

his son had with our son, including their conversations. I don't believe that my son—who was eleven years old at the time—was ever informed by Wolff's son that he was being interviewed for a book; nor is the relevance of my son to Wolff's efforts to chronicle the world of media evident. When Wolff's son is a bit older, he may well wonder about a father who drags his son publicly into his psychobabble. Wolff apparently agrees with these facts. In a TV interview with Brian Williams, asked about his obvious disregard for basic journalistic principles, he responded, "Nothing's off the record." (Except, of course, when Wolff is being interviewed: According to a profile in the *Times*, he insisted that parts of his conversation be off the record.) This modus operandi is probably familiar to those who have served as Wolff's foils, such as the investors in his failed start-up venture. He repaid the trust those investors put in him by skewering them in a book filled with private conversations.

Conventional journalists might *not* recognize Wolff's technique of writing about his subjects without speaking to them. He never sought to interview either my wife or me, and therefore "profiled" us without a substantive conversation with either of us. Nor, to the best of my knowledge, did he interview a single person who knows us well. Many others report similar experiences with Wolff. He is welcome to preen in front of the mirror, as one reviewer described his form of journalism, but shouldn't he at least attempt to understand his subjects before devoting thousands of words to their innermost thoughts? Even Fox News tries harder to be fair and balanced.

My wife and I believe strongly in the causes that we support, and, if reporters want to delve into those activities, that is certainly their privilege. But we are not in public life in the same way that a government official or an entertainment celebrity has chosen to be. We have never—nor would we ever—knowingly permit journalists to write about our home, our personal lives, or our children. With respect to these matters, we believe that we are entitled to our privacy, certainly when journalists are invited to our apartment as guests or when our son goes on a play date.

More important, I believe the vast majority of Americans would agree. As a former journalist, I'm often in the position of defending reporters as responsible professionals trying to do their jobs. Writers like Wolff, who operate irresponsibly, are going to ruin it for the rest of the profession. If journalists want to understand why so many Americans distrust them, Wolff's approach provides a shining example.

STEVEN RATTNER
New York, New York

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Speech Impediment

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

THIS COLUMN SHOULD NOT be necessary. A more decent president would not accuse his opponent of assisting terrorists and harming American troops merely because he criticizes U.S. policy. A more decent conservative movement would call such accusations anti-democratic, rather than mindlessly parroting them, as *National Review Online*'s Jed Babbin did this week. But the president is who he is. And so are his supporters. And so, in response to John Kerry's increased criticism of U.S. policy in Iraq, Bush and his surrogates have essentially accused Democrats of helping insurgents kill American troops.

Dana Milbank, *The Washington Post*'s invaluable White House correspondent, recently charted the rise of this grotesque talking point. Last Tuesday, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch told Fox News that Democrats were "consistently saying things that I think undermine our young men and women who are serving over there." The chairman of the South Dakota Republican Party recently said the state's Democratic senator, Tom Daschle, has brought "comfort to America's enemies." And Bush himself last week warned that Kerry's criticisms can "embolden an enemy by sending mixed message[s]."

Bush's argument is stupid and repugnant. It's stupid because it involves unsupported assumptions about how the Iraqi insurgents think. Bush suggests that, when Kerry says America is losing in Iraq and must therefore change strategy, he makes America look irresolute—and thus emboldens the killers. But one could just as easily make the opposite argument. Perhaps the insurgents *know* America is losing. (If our intelligence agencies can figure it out, why can't they?) Maybe hearing Kerry call for a new strategy makes them fear America will fight the war more effectively—which disheartens them. Republican Representative Tom Cole said in March, "If George Bush loses the election, Osama bin Laden wins the election." But perhaps bin Laden—like his fellow murderers in Iraq—thinks Bush has been good for business. After all, as London's International Institute for Strategic Studies recently asserted, Al Qaeda recruitment has increased since the Iraq war. In his book, former counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke—who knows a lot more about bin Laden than Cole—imagines the terrorist kingpin desperately hoping America will invade Iraq and thus divert resources from the hunt for him. So maybe bin Laden would cast his absentee ballot for Bush, in the hopes of getting more of the same.

If this kind of terrorist mind-reading sounds silly, it is. In fact, when Bush says Kerry is emboldening the enemy, he's contradicting himself. One of Bush's favorite mantras is that the terrorists don't hate us because of what we do; they hate us because of who we are. When critics said the Iraq war would embolden Islamists to attack the United States, Bush supporters scoffed that the terrorists needed no encouragement—they were already doing everything they could to kill Americans. But, if the terrorists can't be emboldened—if they are always doing their utmost to kill Americans—how can John Kerry be emboldening them now? At a recent rally in Columbus, Ohio, Bush said, "These people don't need an excuse for their hatred. I think it's wrong to blame America for the anger and the evil of the killers." But evidently, it's OK to blame John Kerry.

The stupidity doesn't end there. Bush surrogates also say Kerry's criticisms demoralize American troops. But, once again, the argument could just as easily go the other way. Perhaps American troops, who are watching attacks multiply and comrades die, find Bush's happy talk demoralizing. When Quinnipiac University polled Pennsylvanians in mid-August about their views on Iraq, it found that families that included someone on active military duty, in the Reserves, or a veteran, were significantly *less* likely than other voters to support the Iraq war. Overall, they opposed it 54 to 41 percent. A poll by the publisher of *Army Times* found that only 56 percent of active-duty troops support Bush's handling of the war. How can American troops feel demoralized by Kerry's Iraq criticisms when large numbers of them appear to feel the same way?

But the biggest problem with the president's latest talking point isn't that it's dumb; it's that it's anti-democratic. When Bush says Kerry's Iraq criticism emboldens America's enemies, he's essentially saying that—for the good of his country—Kerry should shut up. Presumably, Kerry can still object to Bush's policies on issues, such as health care and gay marriage, which don't have anything to do with the war. But, if Kerry can't criticize President Bush on what everyone acknowledges to be the most important question facing the country, why hold an election at all?

Zell Miller, it appears, has thought of that. In his keynote address at the Republican National Convention, Miller denounced the fact that, "while young Americans are dying in the sands of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan, our nation is being torn apart and made weaker because of the Democrats' manic obsession to bring down our commander-in-chief." It's a revealing formulation. The words "bring down" connote a violent or otherwise illegitimate effort to overthrow an incumbent. A coup brings down a leader; so, perhaps, does impeachment. But Miller is applying the phrase to a democratic election. Miller goes on to describe President Bush as "our commander-in-chief." Commander-in-chief is Bush's military identity. It connotes deference and subordination. And thus, it is the presidential identity least applicable to an election campaign, where political opponents have an absolute right *not* to be subordinate or deferential.

By suggesting that Kerry—in the course of a presidential campaign—should view Bush primarily as our commander-in-chief rather than as an opposing candidate, and that he should not seek to bring him down, Miller is implying that there is something disloyal about an aggressive effort to defeat an incumbent president in a time of war. This anti-democratic vision of the 2004 election is the natural extension of the Bush campaign's anti-democratic suggestion that John Kerry should not criticize the war in Iraq. It is the most demagogic argument of the campaign so far. A more decent president would be ashamed.

PETER BEINART

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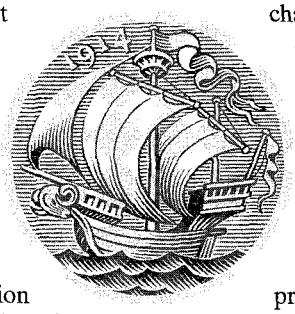
Flip Flop

STOP US IF you've heard this one before. President Bush promises to support the 9/11 Commission in its efforts to reform the U.S. national security apparatus. As soon as Bush finishes pledging his cooperation, the House GOP leadership—subservient to the White House on practically every presidential priority—announces that it's not going to go along. The White House insists it is powerless to tame the congressional Republicans—but, of course, it fully supports the 9/11 Commission.

That's exactly what happened in February, when administration stonewalling so delayed the 9/11 Commission's work that it needed a 60-day extension. Bush quickly agreed, only to have House Speaker Dennis Hastert just as quickly refuse. And now, when it comes to enacting the intelligence reforms proposed by the 9/11 Commission, Bush and Hastert are running the same play.

In August, the president heaped praise on the 9/11 Commission and proposed appointing a National Intelligence Director (NID) to oversee the nation's diffuse intelligence agencies—the key recommendation of a commission he called "thoughtful and valuable." A bipartisan group of senators pledged to shepherd the 9/11 Commission's proposals through Congress this fall. But, even as the Senate was crafting its reform bill, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay called enacting all the Commission's reforms "pretty laughable" in early September and said that the House GOP would prepare its own "reform."

Sure enough, the 335-page House bill released last week plants a shiv in the 9/11 Commission's back. One of the Commission's key recommendations was to give the NID full budgetary and management authority over the intelligence community, reversing the fragmentation wrought by the Defense Department's control over nearly 90 percent of the intelligence budget. The Senate bill does exactly that. But its House GOP counterpart authorizes the NID merely to "facilitate the management" of the $40 billion intelligence purse, and it leaves the defense secretary with the power to hire the heads of Pentagon-based intelligence agencies like the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office. DeLay and Hastert, of course, aren't acting alone. Despite Bush's praise for the 9/11 Commission, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been scurrying to the Hill to knock the teeth out of the NID. After one closed-door briefing with Rumsfeld last week, pro-Commission Republican Chris Shays of Connecticut said the defense secretary "trashed everything about the national intelligence director."



When the House GOP tried to block the 9/11 Commission's extension in February, the move backfired. Three weeks of outcry forced Hastert to back down and give the Commission the time it asked for. So, this time around, the Republican leadership is borrowing a tactic from 2002. Back then, after months of dismissing Democrats' calls for the creation of a Cabinet-level Homeland Security Department, the White House flip-flopped and endorsed the idea—but stuck provisions into the bill that weakened civil service protections and were unacceptable to the Democrats. Then, during the midterm elections, they bludgeoned the Democrats for their perceived intransigence on a key national security matter. Now, with Bush's reelection in the balance, the GOP has larded its intelligence reform bill with measures unpalatable to Democrats, such as expanding Patriot Act powers to allow for the surveillance of suspicious individuals even if they have no known connection with terrorists or enemy governments. And the GOP isn't keeping its strategy a secret. "The Democrats got spanked hard on homeland security," Hastert spokesman John Feehery told *The Washington Post*. "I don't think they want to get spanked again."

They don't need to be. The Democrats should fight to pass the bipartisan Senate bill. The White House has begun to cave: Under pressure, it reluctantly endorsed the Senate bill this week, though House GOP opposition remains. Democrats have powerful allies in making their case. Thomas Kean, the 9/11 Commission's Republican chairman, has called the Senate bill "our dream" and warned against the farcical House GOP alternative. Democrats and pro-Commission Republicans can call on the backing of at least five of the September 11 family members who proved so crucial to forcing the Bush administration to support the creation of the 9/11 Commission: Kristen Breitweiser, Monica Gabrielle, Lorie Van Auken, Mindy Kleinberg, and Patty Casazza, who have endorsed John Kerry. These five widows know every play in the Bush handbook. And they've beaten him at every turn. The Democrats need to make sure they do so again. ■

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NOTEBOOK

FBI WIRETAPS TO DISAPPEAR . . . ZELL MILLER'S RECORD BECOMES CLEAR

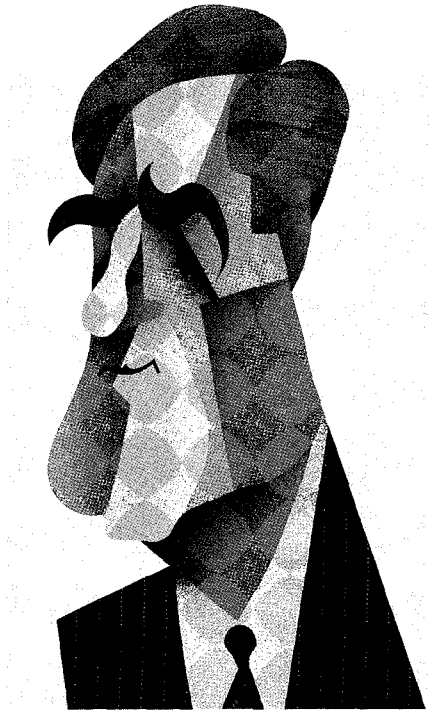
LOST IN TRANSLATION

THE FBI HAS FINALLY DISCOVERED a new, if unexpected, way to deal with its backlog of still-to-be-translated wiretaps: erase them. According to a new report by the Bureau's inspector general, the FBI's computer system has decided to take matters into its own hands and is systematically deleting material.

Five hundred million dollars and four years into the FBI's three-year plan to update its decades-old technology, FBI officials still can't say when they will complete the project. This isn't to say, incidentally, that the current system doesn't work at all: As FBI Director Robert S. Mueller once explained, agents can search the data bank for words like "flight" and "school." It's just that a newer system would allow agents to type in both terms *at once*.

Then there's the problem of language skills. While most FBI agents have an admirably solid grasp of the English language, oddly enough, terrorists often insist on speaking Arabic. This may be why the inspector general's report mentions that a backlog of about 120,000 hours of terrorism-related recordings remains unexamined. Apparently, the Bureau's 200 or so Arabic translators have every intention of deciphering them—after all, divide up the work and it's only 600 hours per person—but it's just going to take a little more time (see Anne O'Donnell, "Speechless," December 22, 2003). At least the backlog doesn't seem to be growing too fast, thanks to the steady deletions. And it beats hiring more Arabic speakers.

Or any. Just this August, a case against an accused terrorist fell apart when it emerged that the FBI had probably mistranslated the word "brother" as "commander." This may be understandable, though, since as late as mid-2002 the Bureau was still testing applicants in a sort of Arabic used only in public speeches and newspapers—useful for monitoring the statements of, say,



Robert Mueller

Hosni Mubarak, but probably less so for day-to-day phone calls. According to one applicant who wrote an op-ed for *The New York Times*: "I tried to offer some feedback about the test's failure to measure skills in everyday spoken Arabic . . . [but the] interview is scripted; there is no room for unscripted interaction." Nor, it appears, script rewrites.

GHOST (WRITER) IN THE MACHINE

THE *WASHINGTON POST*'S DANA Milbank has discovered some uncanny similarities between Iyad Allawi's September 23 address to a joint session of Congress and President Bush's recent speeches on Iraq. Among the parallels Milbank found:

"The world is better off without Saddam Hussein." —Allawi

"The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power." —Bush

"[Iraq is] emerging finally from dark ages of violence." —Allawi

"Iraq will never return to the dark ages of tyranny." —Bush

"[Iraqi forces] are striking their enemies wherever they hide." —Allawi

"We're fighting these enemies wherever they hide." —Bush

"These killers may be just a tiny fraction of our twenty-seven million population." —Allawi

"There's only a few relative to the twenty-five million who are trying to stop the march of freedom." —Bush

Ghostwriting? The White House denies it. Maybe it's just a case of little minds thinking alike.

CRAZY—LIKE A FOX

SOME OF US WERE A BIT WORRIED about Georgia Democrat Zell Miller after his GOP convention speech assaulting John Kerry last month. Would he reunite successfully with the mother ship? Would earthlings make him uncomfortable in the meantime? Most urgently, would the great state of Georgia be deprived of its rightful appropriations by Democrats carrying a grudge?

The first two questions are difficult to answer; certainly, no direct communications with Zellonia have been reported, but one can still hope. Miller, for his part, seems content to wait. On the question of appropriations, however, the good news is that Republicans, in an impressive display of bipartisanship, have shown themselves willing to put Georgia's needs first. According to the congressional newspaper *The Hill*, Republican Senator Pete Domenici was observed catching Miller by the arm and assuring him, "Don't worry about appropriations. I've already put that stuff of yours in there."

So Georgia will be OK. As Miller told *The Hill*: "Everything seems to be fine. I have received no retaliation from any of my Senate colleagues." Surely, in a town so driven by partisan quarrels, THE NEW REPUBLIC has a responsibility to point out little feel-good stories like this.

DAVID COWLES

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FIRE FIGHTING

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO PREPARE TO debate someone as arrogant as the president, there is no one more arrogant and pompous than Greg Craig. You've got to fight fire with fire." —Joe Garcia, Cuban-American and Democratic activist, quoted in *The Miami Herald*, explaining why his fellow Cuban-Americans shouldn't be upset with John Kerry for tapping Gregory Craig, the attorney for Elián Gonzalez's father, to help him with debate prep

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI AND MICHAEL B. Oren reported in "Center Right" (September 27) that the United States placed Hamas and Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations for the first time in November 2001. In fact, they have appeared on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations since 1997, the first year such a list was released. Before that, they had been described as terrorist groups in the State Department's annual reports on terrorism. November 2001 is when the Bush administration placed the two groups on a list of terrorist groups subject to tougher financial sanctions.

Seamus Heaney regrets two errors in "The Door Stands Open" (September 13 & 20). It was Blake, not Yeats, who asserted, "without Contraries there is no progress," and it is Thetis, not Venus, who looks over Achilles's shoulder in Auden's "The Shield of Achilles."

We also regret that in "Strong Medicine," by David J. Rothman (September 27), Evista was described as a competitor to Viagra, when it is an osteoporosis drug.

And Cynthia Ozick, in "And God Saw Literature, That It Was Good" (October 4), stated that William Tyndale was the last individual to translate the Bible in English. Other solo translators include Isaac Leeser in the nineteenth century and Harold Fisch in the twentieth. ■

TNR.commentary

Campaign Journal

RYAN LIZZA

KERRY'S ROSE GARDEN VICTORY: The September 23 Rose Garden press conference with President Bush and Iyad Allawi showed how successful Kerry has been in making the "reality gap" between Bush's rhetoric on Iraq and the facts on the ground a central narrative of the campaign. There were nine questions, and seven of them were about chaos in Iraq:

"Mister President, two more Americans have been beheaded. More than three hundred Iraqis have been killed in the last week. Falluja is out of government control. And U.S. and Iraqi forces have been unable to bring security to diplomatic and commercial centers of Baghdad. Why haven't U.S. forces been able to capture or kill Al Zarqawi, who's blamed for much of the violence?"

"Mister President, John Kerry is accusing you of colossal failures of judgment in Iraq and having failed to level with the American people about how tough it is there. How do you respond to him?"

"Mister President, you say today that the work in Iraq is tough and will remain tough. And yet, you travel this country and a central theme of your campaign is that America is safer because of the invasion of Iraq. Can you understand why Americans may not believe you?"

"Sir, may I just follow, because I don't think you're really answering the question. I mean, I think you're responding to Senator Kerry, but there are beheadings regularly, the insurgent violence continues, and there are no weapons of mass destruction. My question is, can you understand that Americans may not believe you when you say that America is actually safer today?"

"Sir, I'd like you [to] answer Senator Kerry and other critics who accuse you of hypocrisy or opportunism when, on the one hand, you put so much stock in the CIA when it said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, and now say it is just guessing when it paints a pessimistic picture of the political transition."

"You have been accused on the campaign trail in this election year of painting an overly optimistic portrait of the situation on the ground in Iraq. Yesterday, in Valley Forge, you said that there was a 'handful' of people who were willing to kill to try to disrupt the process. Isn't that really understating the case, particularly when there are intelligence reports that hundreds, if not thousands, of foreign fighters are streaming across the border from Syria to take up the fight of the insurgency?"

"Don't the real voices of the Iraqi people themselves contradict the rosy scenarios you're painting here today?"

The other two questions were from an Iraqi journalist, who asked about reconstruction money, and a Fox News correspondent, who asked about "the consequences of the mixed messages you say John Kerry sends."

Bush was, as usual, unwavering in sticking to his message and avoiding the substance of the charges in the seven other questions. But, even so, the Kerry Iraq strategy—making the reality gap a central campaign issue—has been a success.

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

HANDSHAKE AGREEMENT: Before the invasion, the Pentagon touted suggestions made by Ahmed Chalabi that an Iraq free of Saddam Hussein would recognize Israel. Sadly, that's not likely to happen, as a particularly ugly story in the daily Iraqi newspaper *Al Mada* indicates:

National Assembly [NA] members have asked Prime Minister Iyad Allawi to apologise to the Iraqi people for shaking hands with the Israeli foreign minister [at the United Nations last week]. NA Member Mishan al-Jobouri described the event as "shameful." Jenan al-Obaidi, representing Najaf, said Najafis are angry about this and they reject any kind of normalisation with Israel. Abdul Kareem al-Anezi said the prime minister must officially apologise to the Iraqi people. Allawi said there was no American pressure behind the handshake.

And yet it was the U.S. intelligence community whose analysis of Iraq, before and after the invasion, was "just guessing," according to the president, while Chalabi was considered a reliable source.

THE CUT AND RUN: Here's the latest from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld—from his September 24 press conference—on an exit strategy for Iraq:

Any implication that that place has to be peaceful and perfect before we can reduce coalition and U.S. forces, I think, would obviously be unwise because it's never been peaceful and perfect and it isn't likely to be.

And who said Kerry was the one in favor of cutting and running?

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Campaign Journal

Red Zone

BY RYAN LIZZA

On the eve of his first debate with George W. Bush, the good news for John Kerry is that poll after poll shows that his attempt to showcase the setbacks in Iraq is turning public opinion against the war. A new Pew poll, for example, shows that the public's confidence in Bush's handling of Iraq has dropped six points since Kerry opened his new line of attack. Kerry's strategy is undoubtedly working. The problem is that Bush's strategy of destroying Kerry's credibility is working better.

Perhaps the worst news for Kerry is his deteriorating favorability rating. In several of the most important battleground states, such as Wisconsin and Ohio, that number has dipped into the 30s in some polls since the Democratic convention in late July. In ABC's recent national poll, Kerry's favorability rating dropped from 51 to 37 percent since he left Boston, and his unfavorability rating rose from 32 to 42 percent. Pointing to his comeback in the Iowa caucuses last winter, some aides have argued that Kerry can overtake Bush in the debates. But in Iowa, even when Kerry was in third place, his favorability ratings remained strong. That is how his campaign knew that gambling everything on Iowa made sense. Kerry's high favorability rating told them he had a great deal of latent support they could tap if Howard Dean and Dick Gephardt stumbled. They were right. But now, this basic measure of the public's view of the candidate is in the red zone, making a debate revival much tougher.

Measures of other personal attributes are in similarly bad shape. Only 23 percent of respondents to the Pew poll think Kerry is "willing to take an unpopular stand." Just 28 percent say he is a "strong leader," and 36 percent say he's "good in a crisis." These numbers complicate Kerry's job in the debates in two important ways. For one, he must attack Bush without worsening his own image, especially with those delicate flowers known as swing voters, who insist they hate negative politics. For another, by sowing so many doubts about Kerry's character, Bush has preemptively undermined anything that comes out of Kerry's mouth. (Consultants sometimes call it "destroying the aircraft carrier rather than shooting down each plane.") If Kerry loses, his decision not to vigorously defend himself from Bush's attack ads this spring—the so-called rope-a-dope strategy—and not to mount a sustained character-based attack on Bush himself over the spring and summer will be seen as crucial mistakes.

Despite the recent spate of bad polling news, there are still areas of opportunity for Kerry. Pollster Stanley Greenberg, who is now advising the Kerry campaign, recently studied 3,000 interviews conducted in September and broke down potential Kerry targets into two groups. One is filled with Democratic base voters. Kerry is currently underperforming among four pillars of the Democratic coalition—white single women, well-educated white women, white union households, and African Americans—each of which is tepid in its support for different reasons. In a polling memo, Greenberg argues that blacks want Kerry to get tougher on Bush, college-educated women want to hear Kerry's plan for Iraq, and union members aren't hearing enough about the economy and doubt if Kerry's spine is steely enough to fight terrorism. But still, these should be natural Democratic voters, and the slack among them in support for Kerry is "[o]ne reason why Kerry is likely to make gains after the debate," argues Greenberg.

The other area of opportunity for Kerry is with what might be called "change-gap swing voters." Across a wide range of swing voter demographics, there is a gap between the percentage who say they want a new direction for the country and the percentage who say they support Kerry. Greenberg says the "biggest potential gold mine" is with white women without college degrees, voters who, in previous elections, have been dubbed "waitress moms." Forty-eight percent say they want a new direction, but only 41 percent of them support Kerry. This same dynamic exists among older white women, the under-30 crowd, and rural voters, whom Greenberg calls the "biggest key to the Bush election." In fact, rural voters seem to be a driving force behind the shrinking of the electoral battleground that Kerry now faces.

That shrinkage has been dramatic. Whereas Kerry's campaign was once boldly advertising in Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Virginia, all four states now appear out of reach. Kerry also seems to have given up on John Edwards's home state of North Carolina, even though several recent polls show a close race. Even more surprising is that Kerry has stopped advertising in Missouri, a bellwether state that Bush won by just three points in 2000.

This means there are only eleven true battleground states left. The rough consensus among campaign handicappers like Charlie Cook is that Kerry has 15 states and Washington, D.C., either locked up or leaning his way, for a total of 207 electoral votes. Bush has 24 states locked up or leaning his way, for a total of 208 votes. To get to victory—270 electoral votes—Bush and Kerry must fight over the remaining eleven toss-ups, worth 123 electoral votes. First, there are the three large battleground states of Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Then there are the three upper Midwestern states that Al Gore barely won in 2000 (Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa), and the two Northeastern states that Bush narrowly won (New Hampshire and West Virginia). Finally, there are the two rapidly growing red Western states that are wild cards in this race (Colorado and Nevada) and their blue Southwestern neighbor (New Mexico).

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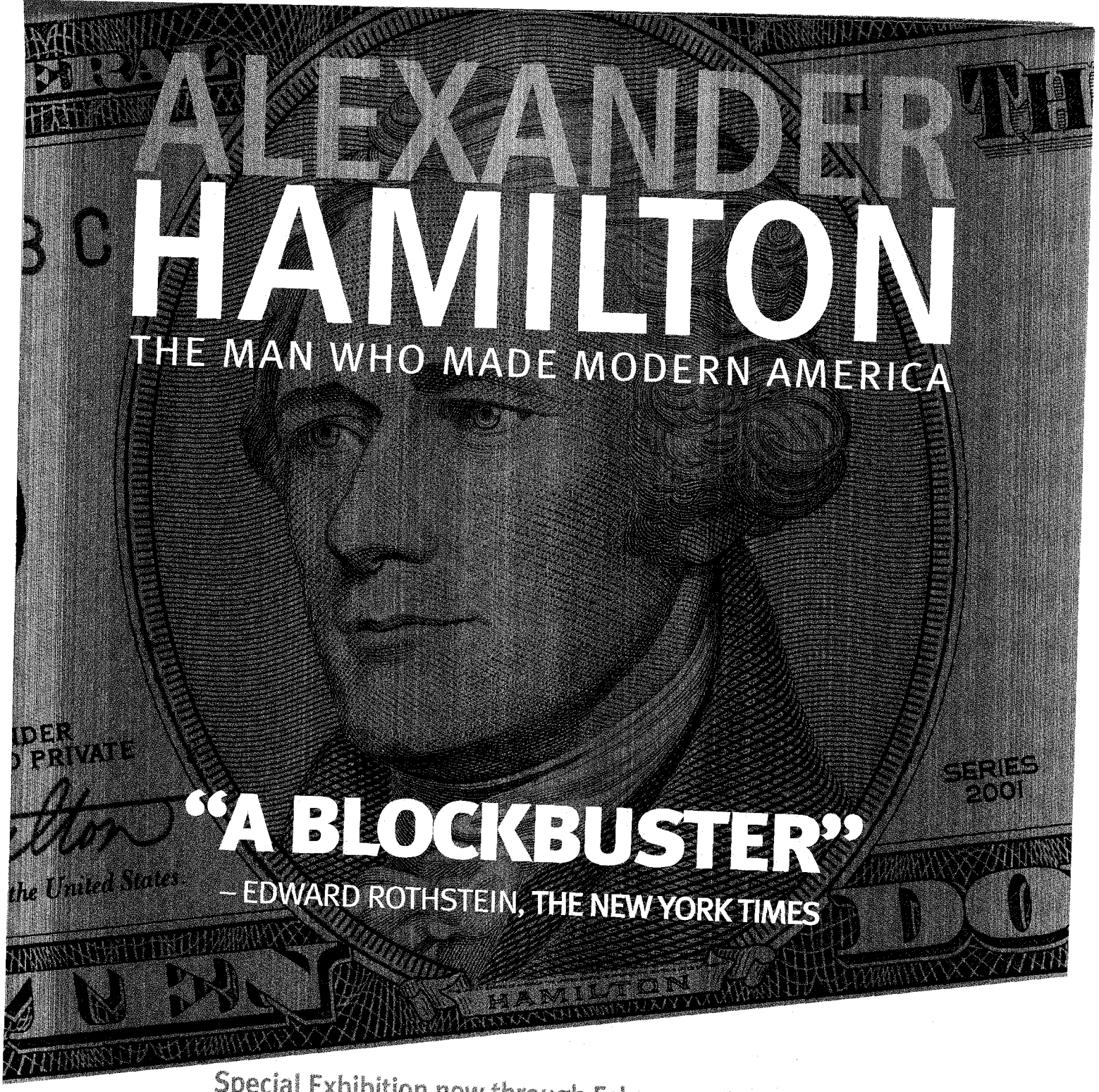

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Of the three big battlegrounds, Kerry is doing best in Pennsylvania, which Gore won by four points. Like Michigan, which was once a battleground but now seems relatively safe for Kerry, Pennsylvania appears to have resisted some of the worst post-convention trends. Bush's bounce there was small and short-lived compared with other battleground states. Kerry has to win Pennsylvania and then one more of the big three. Ohio has seen a tilt toward Bush since his convention, but it has not yet gone the way of Missouri. Florida, with its unique pastiche of ethnic groups, offers opportunities for Kerry among Miami Cubans, Jews, Haitians, and I-4 corridor Hispanics, who could offset Bush's gains in rural areas. Hurricanes have created confusion among pollsters about the state of the race. After the first debate, Kerry may have to take stock and choose between targeting Florida or Ohio.

The rest of the route to 270 goes through the eight small and midsize states concentrated in three regions. Kerry's rural problem is most acute in the upper Midwest. In both Iowa and Wisconsin, Gore did better in rural areas than he did in the rest of the country. As Michael Barone has noted, "Gore carried many historically Republican or marginal counties in western Wisconsin, just as he carried many rural counties across the Mississippi River in eastern Iowa." Kerry seems to be losing that advantage as Bush concentrates his visits and get-out-the-vote efforts on sparsely populated areas of the states. Meanwhile, Bush's lavish agricultural subsidies and the relatively buoyant local economies (especially compared with the industrial battlegrounds to the east) have made it harder for Kerry to hold onto these states. He appears safest in Minnesota, but, if he loses Wisconsin and Iowa's 17 electoral votes, his only fallback is to hold New Mexico and raid at least two of the four small states—worth 23 electoral votes—that Bush barely won in 2000.

But perhaps these small red toss-up states hold more promise than the fading blue ones anyway. New Hampshire is dead even right now and seems more natural in the Kerry column, especially since much of it has become a virtual suburb of Boston. Meanwhile, in West Virginia, a historically Democratic state that Bush won, Kerry remains competitive and has avoided association with the environment and gun-control issues that killed Gore.

Finally, in the Western battlegrounds, Nevada's Clark County, home to Las Vegas, has added more people since the last presidential election than almost any other county in America. Growth there means Democrats: In every election since 1980, the percentage of the county voting Democratic has increased. Colorado, which was not even competitive in 2000, has a growing high-tech, latte-town liberal culture centered around Boulder and Denver that is offsetting the state's evangelical Christian and conservative exurbs. In nearby New Mexico, which Gore barely won, the trends also seem to favor Kerry. The pro-Bush white areas of the state are not growing nearly as fast as the pro-Kerry Hispanic and Native American areas. Nevada's explosive growth and Kerry's opposition to making Yucca Mountain a nuclear depository have opened the doors to victory.

All eleven of these states are still up for grabs, though Bush leads in more of them than Kerry does. Looking beyond the current horserace, what we may be seeing in the shifting battleground is a consolidation of general trends in both parties, with Democrats potentially locking down more of the Northeast (Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and, just possibly, West Virginia) and union-heavy states like Michigan, while Bush uses cultural issues and terrorism to increase his advantage in the rural upper Midwest. Meanwhile, the explosive growth in some Western and Southwestern states creates an unsettled electorate there that keeps both sides on their toes. With a little imagination, this shifting battleground may be an opportunity for Kerry rather than a threat. ■

John Sasso's mystique.

Shadow Knows

BY FRANKLIN FOER

ONCE UPON A time, political consultants had to claw their way onto television. Only the giants of the profession—John Sears, Bob Squier—ever burst onto the tube. But then, along came cable—with its many channels and hours to fill—and the democratization of punditry, allowing consultants to spend significant parts of their days on air. And, according to the time-honored laws of the business, hours spent in green rooms are well worth it. There's no better way to attract clients than to become a celebrity yourself.

By the logic of these laws, John Sasso, the Boston-based strategist, should be a lowly field-worker living hand-to-mouth and getting out the vote in a remote corner of upstate New York. The records kept by Nexis show that Sasso hasn't had a national TV interview for twelve years. Occasionally, print reporters talk to him. But print isn't a venue that really boosts his profile. Despite his natural gregariousness, Sasso tends to answer questions with short, colorless repetitions of the party line that hardly sear themselves into memory. "There is a direct line between the choices Bush has made between job loss, lack of health care, and falling family incomes," he told the Associated Press in early September.

Far from relegating Sasso to obscurity, however, his negligible public persona has only increased his cache. In recent years, he has emerged as the Keyser Söze of the Democratic Party—an enigmatic figure talked about in hushed tones, ascribed incredible powers. Earlier this month, he joined John Kerry on his campaign plane, filling the role of most-trusted adviser. "I've never seen Kerry give someone so much authority," says one campaign aide. Since assuming his powerful position, he has been widely credited with helping

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right the campaign—instilling much-needed discipline, speaking honest truths to Kerry, and encouraging feisty responses to the opposition's attacks. "He's made a night-and-day difference," says another aide. Sasso has many strengths as a manager and strategist. But, in the case of the Kerry campaign, his most important attribute is his mystique—a quality that makes him loved, feared, and capable of accomplishing the hardest task in Kerry's world: imposing order.

THERE'S NO BIGGER believer in the Sasso mystique than John Kerry. "Sasso is someone who Kerry wanted to run his campaign all along," says Sasso's friend Dan Payne, the Boston consultant. Twice, Sasso rebuffed Kerry's requests to take the top job—at the campaign's start and then again last fall after the firing of campaign manager Jim Jordan. On both occasions, Sasso, who runs a boutique consulting firm that has represented John Hancock Financial Services and the Boston Red Sox, felt he couldn't abandon his clients.

This mystique traces to 1982. Four years earlier, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis had paid dearly for running the state in a sanctimonious style. A conservative Democrat named Ed King had upended him in the primary. But now, with Sasso as his makeover artist, Dukakis presented himself as a chastened pol and exacted revenge against King, easily reclaiming the statehouse. For the next four years, Sasso served as the governor's chief secretary and alter ego, handling the nitty-gritty that the high-minded Dukakis couldn't stomach. As Richard Ben Cramer recounts in *What It Takes*, his account of the 1988 presidential race, "The legislators still couldn't talk to Michael about what mattered to them: a new bridge on Route 464, or a job for a nice young man of good family. ... Dukakis would look at them like they'd brought dirt into his office. But with Sasso as Chief Secretary, they could come in, have a drink, a cigar, and a sympathetic chat; John would try to help, but he'd add: '*You know how the Governor is. ...*'"

Then, in 1986, Sasso executed a monumental act of chutzpah. He convinced Dukakis, who was unknown nationally and had no apparent interest in higher office, that he could win the White House. Sasso wrote memos carefully detailing strategy—raising Greek-American money, using that money to make a play for the South on Super Tuesday—that Dukakis implemented with precision and success. Only Sasso wasn't there to see his plan come to fruition. In the fall of 1987, he sent a tape to *The New York Times*' Maureen Dowd. It captured Dukakis's primary opponent, Senator Joe Biden, plagiarizing a speech from British Labour leader Neil Kinnock. When Sasso admitted leaking the tape, Dukakis caved to pressure from Biden's powerful friends, telling him, "You're gonna have to go." Sasso's firing raises a counterfactual question that haunts Democrats to this day: What if Dukakis had kept his genius at his side?

Kerry knows this history well, having served as Dukakis's lieutenant governor. And, as a senator watching the Biden debacle unfold, he advocated against firing Sasso. "Kerry was very strong in his belief that the punishment didn't fit the crime," says Michael Goldman, a Boston political consultant who now hosts a show for Bloomberg Radio. Indeed, it was Sasso's work for Dukakis that convinced Kerry to pursue him. "Kerry thought of Dukakis as a lesser light than himself," one campaign adviser told me. "He believes, if Sasso could make Dukakis a star, then he must be a genius."

Kerry holds Sasso in higher regard than any other aide, and that respect has made a noticeable difference in the campaign. Until recently, Kerry was inundated with operational details, adjudicating turf wars and reworking organizational flow charts. Even though he relied on Bob Shrum during the primaries, campaign aides say he never had complete faith in him. Sasso, for the first time, provides Kerry with an aide he completely trusts to handle logistics.

Kerry's lack of a trusted aide also hurt him on the stump. "A great speech can be really bad if Kerry doesn't have faith in it," says one operative. That's when Kerry begins to ad lib, piling on windy improvisations like dirty laundry. According to this operative, Kerry's confidence depends on someone he trusts blessing his material. It's not a coincidence that, since Sasso started traveling with Kerry on his plane, Kerry's delivery has grown crisper, as it was during last week's Iraq speech at New York University.

IT WASN'T UNTIL last April that Sasso finally agreed to join the campaign full time. Kerry installed him in the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to oversee the party's field operations and advertising campaign—a vital role. But many in the campaign expected this to be a transitional job, with Sasso taking over the campaign after the convention. That never happened. Throughout August, Sasso seemed "downright morose," says one of his friends. He spent the month politely, but firmly, chastising campaign manager Mary Beth Cahill for failing to quickly and coherently rebut Bush's attacks. "Things were tense as hell with Mary Beth," says a Kerry adviser. It wasn't until Sasso's complaints became conventional wisdom that Kerry acted upon them. At the beginning of September, he brought Sasso onto his plane, where he is now the prime pipe through which advice and information flow to Kerry.

Sasso has been hailed as a great manager—a skill that comes in part from the lessons he learned from his 1987 firing. The injustice of that removal (these days, aides would be canned if they *didn't* distribute such damning material about an opponent) left large scars—as did the attendant media feeding frenzy. Sasso adopted a kind of omertà in response. Goldman has heard Sasso say, "I don't talk about private meetings, and I don't talk to people who do." Sasso, after all, was brutalized not just by reporters but by friends. Some of his protégés even called for his scalp. Massachusetts Democratic Party Chairman Phil Johnston told me, "I was at the table when the governor made the decision. I supported Sasso, but I was shocked by the people who were ready to throw him overboard." In response to this betrayal, Sasso has become even more ferociously loyal to his

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defenders and true friends. And there's no one he's more loyal to than Kerry. When DNC staffers dumped all over their nominee, Sasso took them to task and delivered elegiac speeches testifying to Kerry's character.

But there's a flip side to Sasso's loyalty: He's brutal to those who don't reciprocate it. Sasso's father came from the area around Bari, but he might as well have come from Sicily. "When he feels like someone lied to him or crossed him, he's as tough as anyone I know," says Johnston, who describes Sasso standing a state legislator "against the wall" and delivering a Lyndon Johnson–like thrashing until he promised to change a vote. "People want to do well for John," says Leslie Dach, a vice chairman of Edelman Public Relations, whom Sasso tapped to join the DNC's war room.

With so many status-anxious consultants, the Kerry campaign badly needed Sasso's infusion of loyalty and order. Where aides once jockeyed to gain Kerry's attention—exploiting his management inexperience and desire to hear all sides of an argument—Sasso now shields Kerry from the distraction of these supplicants. He contains strategic debates to conference calls, on which he is perceived as Kerry's mouthpiece. But most important are his skills as a delegator and disciplinarian. One aide told me, "He keeps people in their lanes. People don't worry anymore about looking over the shoulder to see if someone is grabbing their turf."

There is, however, an unfortunate parallel between the Kerry and Dukakis campaigns. In 1988, Dukakis brought Sasso back from political exile just after Labor Day and handed him control of the shambolic operation. But the damage done to Dukakis by Lee Atwater during his absence proved too great to overcome. Now, 16 years later, almost to the date, Sasso has been installed in another foundering campaign. Kerry's campaign isn't nearly as hopeless or ill as Dukakis's. But the parallel raises the grim prospect that Sasso has again been brought aboard without enough time to prove that he deserves his reputation. If he can't help engineer a quick turnaround this time, he will forever remain haunted by the same question: What if? ■

Why W. doesn't go to church.

Empty Pew

BY AMY SULLIVAN

Most Americans are aware that George W. Bush is a religious man. He is, after all, the man who presided over a religious revival of sorts at the Republican National Convention. He is the man who has pioneered what could be called cardio-diplomacy, judging world leaders—and, at times, entire nations—by their "hearts." He is the subject of at least four spiritual hagiographies currently in bookstores, and one religious documentary ("George W. Bush: Faith in the White House"). Most famously, Americans know him as the man who, when asked to cite the philosopher who had the greatest influence on him, named Jesus Christ.

What most—including many of the president's fiercest supporters—don't know, however, is that Bush doesn't go to church. Sure, when he weekends at Camp David, Bush spends Sunday morning with the compound's chaplain. And, every so often, he drops in on the little Episcopal church across Lafayette Park from the White House. But the president who has staked much of his domestic agenda on the argument that religious communities hold the key to solving social problems doesn't belong to a congregation.

It should be a politically intriguing story. Bush is one of the most explicitly religious politicians in American history. Both of his presidential campaigns have used religion to appeal emotionally to voters. The entire philosophy behind his signature slogan, "compassionate conservatism," rests on the belief that religious communities have a unique ability to tend to the nation's social ills. And yet, after the flood of coverage around Bush's first—and only—visit to a neighborhood church during inauguration weekend in Washington, D.C., no one has bothered to report on the president's whereabouts on Sunday mornings.

Around Washington, D.C., it's considered bad form to point out that Bush doesn't regularly attend church. "You don't have to go to church to be a good religious person," argue his defenders. And they're right. They have made much political hay, however, over polls that indicate Democratic voters attend church less frequently than Republicans, so even the most brazen feel compelled to offer explanations for Bush's absence from church membership rolls.

The first excuse conservatives provide is that Bush can't possibly be expected to have time to go to church, what with being leader of the free world and all. Yet, during Jimmy Carter's four years in the White House, he found time not only to attend a Baptist church in the Washington, D.C., area, but to teach Sunday school there as well. For a presidential delegator like Bush—who has freed up enough time to spend approximately one-third of his presidency on vacation—finding a few hours for church should be a snap.

But, even if Bush had the time for church services, supporters protest, the security precautions necessary for a presidential visit would drive congregants away. This is the exact same argument the Reagan White House trotted out to explain why the patron saint of the religious right hardly ever attended church from 1981 to 1989. Bomb-sniffing dogs, metal detectors, and security personnel, so the theory goes, would pose an onerous burden for the average church. "The president wants to avoid the sort of major

Amy Sullivan is an editor of THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY.

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weekly disruption that would be caused if he went to church," says David Aikman, author of *A Man of Faith: The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush.*

As it happens, I attended Foundry United Methodist Church for several years during the late '90s when the Clintons were members there. The only imposition was the extra ten seconds it took to walk through a metal detector. Parishioners did not leave the church in droves; on the contrary, many were pleasantly surprised to find that the Clintons played an active role in church life, particularly while Chelsea was involved in the choir and youth group.

If time and security aren't the reasons, what excuse does that leave? The very fact that the president doesn't attend church, some leading conservatives insist, is proof of what a good Christian he is. Unlike certain past presidents they could name but won't—ahem, cough, Bill Clinton—Bush doesn't feel the need to prove his religiosity. "This president has not made an issue of where he goes to church," says Michael Cromartie of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. "I find it refreshing that we don't have a president coming out of church with a large Bible under his arm." Conservatives relish this opportunity for a little gratuitous Clinton-bashing. In private, however, they admit the explanation doesn't hold up. "I really don't get it," one prominent Bush partisan told me. "There's no reason why the president couldn't find a church around here if he wanted to."

IN TRUTH, BUSH probably doesn't spend Sunday morning watching "Meet the Press" or wrestling with *The New York Times* crossword puzzle. He no doubt observes the Sabbath in his own way, as do millions of Americans who identify themselves as religious but don't attend church. Bush has been shaped by a "small-group" mentality, emphasizing a one-on-one relationship with God over the experience of Christian fellowship in a community.

Or it could be that Bush's faith, while sincere, is not terribly deep. Aikman, who had significant access to Bush confidantes while writing his book, has said that he "could not get from anybody a sort of credo of what [Bush] believes." Nevertheless, Aikman pressed on by "intuit[ing]" Bush's faith and presenting as evidence of the president's deep spiritual commitment his fondness for carrots and jogging (apparently a response to the scriptural admonition to treat the body as a temple for God) and the politeness of White House staffers ("though manners are not specifically connected to George W.'s personal religious faith, it was as though the discipline he brought to his own life of prayer and Bible study filtered down into the work habits of everyone who worked with him").

It shouldn't really matter. A president's religious habits often reveal far less about his faith than the decisions he makes. But, more than any other president, Bush has staked his political reputation on being a devout man of faith. The implied and often explicit responsibility for one another that undergirds congregational life is at the heart of Bush's faith-based policy agenda. The fact that he isn't himself a member of a congregation should be relevant.

It's not as if political reporters have ignored the church-going habits of Bush's opponent. During the "John Kerry Wafer Watch," they have done everything short of inspect the senator's molars for evidence of any unswallowed Host. Hyperbole? A recent Kerry campaign pool report included this observation: "Both Mr. and Mrs. received communion, taking the host from the priests in their hands (others took direct to mouth). They spent ample time on the kneeler."

When Bush moved to Washington in early 2001, many religious observers bandied about the question of which church the incoming president would attend. Four years later, the answer is hidden in plain sight: The emperor has no church. ■

Istanbul Dispatch

Turkey Club

BY HASSAN FATTAH

FOR MORE THAN a decade, you could take several things for granted in Turkey. Islamists normally had no role in government, the army was ultimately in charge of politics, and Ankara was a staunch ally of Israel. The rise of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's popular prime minister, whose party was elected in 2002 in the biggest vote in recent Turkish history, changed the first two assumptions. Erdogan hails from an Islamic party that had pushed for the legalization of the headscarf and other blurrings of the line between mosque and state. In office, Erdogan has asserted unprecedented civilian control of government, all but pushing aside the once-powerful Turkish military.

Now, the third assumption looks shaky as well: As Turkey becomes more democratic, it is moving away from Israel. This June, Erdogan stood before a group of parliamentarians from his ruling Justice and Development Party (A.K.) and leveled the most public criticism of the Israeli government in decades. "Recent actions of Israel have given rise to anti-Semitism in the world," Erdogan announced. Israel's policies of demolishing Palestinian houses, assassinating leaders of Palestinian militant groups, and blockading areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip amounted to "state terror," he warned. Israel's Foreign Ministry quickly hit back with a condemnation of Erdogan, charging, "Turkey's allegations that Israel's security measures contribute to anti-Semitism ... only reinforces those wishing to harm the Jewish people." Analysts and politicians on both sides waited for cooler heads to prevail. They're still waiting: The exchange proved only the opening salvo in a war of rhetoric that could leave Israel without its key ally in the Middle East.

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SINCE THE EXCHANGE, relations between the two nations have deteriorated further. In short order, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul recalled Turkey's ambassador to Israel—a major slap in the face for an ally. At the same time, Gul announced he was considering a full-fledged ambassador to the Palestinian Authority. And Gul warned that Turkey would not stop criticizing the Jewish state. In fact, the deteriorating relationship between Turkey and Israel so worried Washington that President Bush reportedly spoke with Erdogan about relations with Israel this summer.

But Erdogan was not swayed. To demonstrate Turkey's seriousness, he asked the Turkish military not to sign any new deals with Israeli companies, which had found Turkey a highly lucrative market for weapons. Sources say one large contract in which Israel was involved was canceled completely.

Israel has responded. This summer, Israeli national airline El Al suspended flights to Turkey after the Turkish government suddenly refused to allow El Al's armed air marshals to operate within Turkish airports; El Al's decision stranded many Israeli travelers in Turkey. Meanwhile, Israel's Foreign Ministry has condemned many of Turkey's statements and decisions.

Creating rifts is unusual for Erdogan, whose charm has won over everyone from European leaders to Kurdish rebels. He's also popular with the Turkish public. The A.K. has delivered a successful neoliberal economic agenda that has helped stabilize the country's economy, cutting inflation—which used to top 100 percent each year—to single digits. In a show of public support, Erdogan's party swept municipal elections in March.

Yet, as Turkey becomes more democratic and the military moves back into the barracks, Erdogan, like any politician, has had to pacify his core constituency. In his case, that core consists largely of conservative, religious Turks. For these supporters, the prime minister's snubs of Israel are red meat. "It's clear the honeymoon is over. But the honeymoon wasn't realistic anyway," says Ozgul Erdemli, an analyst with a leading Turkish political action committee and think tank.

What's more, as Turkey has democratized, its policy agenda has diverged from Israel's. In the 1990s, the two nations had almost identical worldviews. Isolated from the Arab world, both sought regional security partners. With all-out war raging in Turkey's Kurdish areas, Turkey needed high-tech weaponry, especially after many European nations halted arms sales to Ankara because of human rights abuses. Indeed, Turkey purchased some $3 billion in military equipment from Israel during the '90s, and Israeli defense companies grew so entrenched in the Turkish procurement system that contracts were often awarded to them without competitive tenders. Meanwhile, the two nations saw radical Islamism as a common threat, and Ankara and Jerusalem

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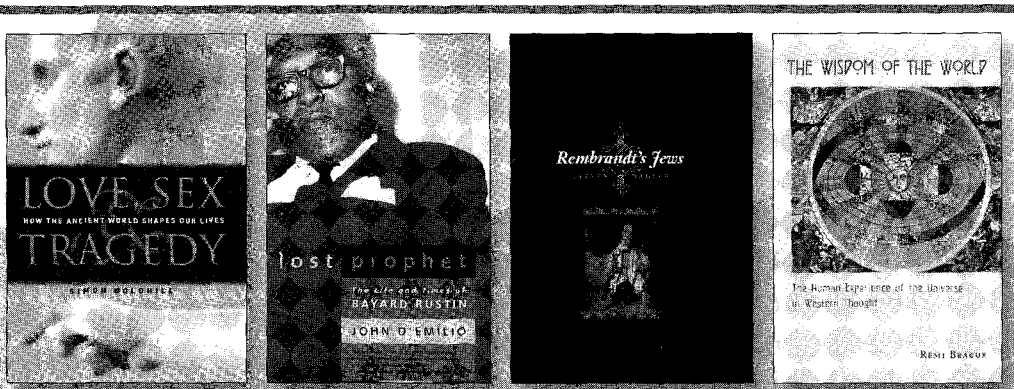

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cooperated closely on intelligence, focusing on Iran and on Syria, which was alleged to be supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a leading terrorist group.

These days, Turkey's agenda has changed. Once terrified of Islamists, the country is now run by an Islamic-rooted party that wants to make the country a leader in the Muslim world. So Erdogan has boosted relations with Iran and Syria, hosting Syrian leader Bashar Al Assad and top Iranian officials and signing trade deals with Tehran and Damascus. Israel, of course, continues to view Iran and Syria as its major adversaries. "Turkish domestic politics has led to a new orientation in foreign policy," says Bulent Aras, an associate professor of political science at Fatih University in Istanbul. "It has been far more in tune with domestic societal demands than ever before." In fact, in response to Turkey's politicking, the country was elected to head the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in June. The OIC has become another platform for Turkish leaders to demonstrate their Islamic bona fides to the Muslim world, partly by taking public jabs at Israel.

Meanwhile, Turkey has come to an uneasy accommodation with its Kurdish minority, inking cease-fires with rebel groups and thus reducing the need for Israeli arms. Even in southern Kurdish strongholds like Diyarbakir, the government's heavy military presence has melted away. But allegations—most notably in *The New Yorker*—of Israeli involvement in training Kurdish militias, including remnants of the PKK, have further angered Turks, especially conservatives who have long suspected that Israel wants to create a Kurdish ministate in the heart of the region. This summer, a rash of small bombings in Istanbul and other cities linked to what seems like a revived PKK have only fueled Turkish conspiracy theories about Israel.

NO ONE EXPECTS Turkey to cut all ties to Israel. But many expect a fundamentally changed relationship, with Turkey relying less on Israeli aid and spending more time wooing Arab leaders. This may not prove a major problem for Turkey, which can gain by positioning itself as a bridge between Europe and the Arab world, both of which contain bigger trade partners than Israel.

For Israel, the consequences may be more severe. Besides losing one of the largest markets for its arms—and its best intelligence source in the Middle East—it faces deeper regional isolation, Israeli analysts say. Syria may be strengthened by its ties to Turkey and less willing to consider dealing with the Jewish state. With Iran edging closer to developing a nuclear weapon, Israel may soon have to decide whether to strike Iranian reactors—as it did with Iraq in 1981—without the tacit support of the Turkish military, the second-most powerful army in the region. Israel has long complained about its isolation as the only true democracy in the Middle East. Who ever thought that the birth of a second real Middle Eastern democracy would leave it more isolated still? ■

No one comes clean on Iraq.

Evil Lesser

BY MARTIN PERETZ

A FRIEND OF mine says the American electorate must choose between "the evil of the two lessers." That's my take, too. I don't mean there aren't some real differences: stem-cell research, for example, and the class distribution of America's tax burden. Maybe that's enough for you. Maybe it's enough for me, too—and on those issues, I'm with John Kerry. But, even on the environment, where a great gulf supposedly separates the candidates, Kerry's promises are exuberant but vague, and George W. Bush, as governor of Texas, promoted one of the largest and most productive programs of wind farms in the country. This actually diminishes our dependency on Middle Eastern oil, something Kerry's rhetoric about energy independence does not.

But much of the passion behind people's preferences stems not from issues, but from character. There is this insufferable certainty among some elites that Bush is just not literate and that Kerry is. It is true that Bush does not, as a rule, speak in clear English sentences. But neither, frankly, does Kerry. That's why both of their handlers (and God only knows how many handlers Kerry has) so severely limit their exposure to question-and-answer press scrutiny. Here is a typical Kerry ramble, orotund yet banal, which I saw on *The Wall Street Journal*'s website:

> What's your plan, mister president, to get the other countries in there? What's your plan to have 90 percent of the casualties and 90 percent of the cost being carried by America? I mean, he is the president today, and we have given him advice from day one; from day one, from the floor of the Senate when we debated it, where I said don't—you know, you've got to have other countries with you, don't make an end run around the U.N. The difficulty is not winning the military, it's winning the peace; and he ignored it.

Kerry has staked his entire campaign on whatever his position on Iraq is at the moment. This is not a stable foundation. (If he loses, will the Clintonites say Kerry lost because he didn't take their advice to drop Iraq and focus on jobs and health care?) But Iraq is what fires up Kerry's base voters—many of whom are former devotees of Howard Dean and even Michael Moore (whose vulgar dishonesty, combined with a particular animus toward Israel, makes Bush seem like an acolyte of Sissela Bok's astringent book *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*). And, since Kerry is losing the historic Democratic majority among

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women, is running barely even among young people, and may lose once-solidly Democratic New Jersey, he has no choice but to shore up his core of supporters. Kerry suffers no discomfort in having been a yo-yo on Iraq. After all, he has been one for years. In fact, every vote Kerry has cast on Iraq since 1991, when he opposed the first Gulf war, has mirrored a nano-political calculus. He always has a convoluted explanation for the doubters in his camp about why he did this and not that. And it always manages to persuade those in the electorate who are content merely that Kerry is not Bush.

On Iraq, I am with Bush. Yes, I am repelled by how he and his crowd play fast and loose with the facts, by their elevation of their foreign policy reasoning into some kind of catechism. Still, Iraq without Saddam Hussein is like Russia without Josef Stalin: By no means perfect, but a vast improvement. Mahdi Obeidi, the former head of Iraq's nuclear centrifuge program, recently published an op-ed in *The New York Times* arguing that, were Saddam still in power and had international sanctions expired, as they inevitably would have, Baathist Iraq could easily have plunged back into the atomic game. The world has much to thank the United States for on this count.

The Bushies' big mistake was to take a far-too-hopeful view of Arab politics. They thought moderation and tolerance would be the inevitable legacy of Saddam's fall. But they underestimated the deforming injuries Saddam inflicted on the Iraqi population. And they underestimated the cultural gap between us and them. (In this, they were aided by generations of Arabist diplomats and professors who downplayed cultural difference. Ironically, it is just these types who are now saying this optimistic view is naïve, which it probably is.) The Bush administration underestimated the bloody zealotry of Iraqi factions, both secular and pious. It did not comprehend that Al Jazeera and much of the Arab media would root for the killers. It did not grasp sufficiently that Iraq's neighbors wished the Iraqis ill, that Syria—a brutal Alawite minority regime that has slaughtered thousands of Sunni militants—would give them free passage to do mayhem next door. But, by contrast, Kerry would have done nothing to disempower the Iraqi Baath, and, if by some miracle he had, he would have done nothing to disarm the murderous mobs that have arisen in its wake.

Notwithstanding both the administration's grievous lack of candor and its clumsy postwar planning, the use of force against Iraq was just. What kind of "just war" theory would see in the defeat of Saddam anything but a quintessential good? There wasn't in Iraq even the fantasy of an idealized Viet Cong. And, as for those who execute and behead the wretched and the miserable, who explode bombs and cars so that random poor people seeking work will die, who murder the insufficiently pious and ordinary shop owners and civil servants and happenstance patients in hospitals in the thousands and thousands, why would anyone cast these killers as hapless victims of empire? Indeed, the ruthlessness of the suicide bombers and the mercilessness of the decapitators are reasons, in and of themselves, for the United States to stay and fight. Before the toppling, Iraq was governed by the routine terrorism of a cruel regime. Now, it is under siege by terrorism, plain and simple. We will see whether Lieutenant General David Petraeus—placed in charge of building an Iraqi army that will fight—can overcome this. The gloating hypercritics may yet be astonished. But the very notion that there could be in Iraq, with its history of tyranny over eight decades since Gertrude Bell carved it out of whole cloth, a reasonably free election in 13 or 14 or 15 of the country's 18 provinces is a genuine, even astonishing, accomplishment.

In an editorial in last week's New Republic, we wrote that "to win reelection, Bush is lying" about Iraq. I have no qualms about that assertion. But now Kerry has spoken definitively about Iraq as well, at New York University and elsewhere. His speeches have produced a flurry of hosannas. TNR put a headline on its cover, echoing a phrase in Kerry's address, that proclaimed there was, "finally, a real debate on Iraq." But only Ryan Lizza, in last week's issue, termed Kerry's prescriptions what they really are: "fantastic," used in its correct meaning—that is, extravagantly fanciful, capricious, grotesque. So, if Bush is lying about Iraq, so is Kerry. It's not just that he has exaggerated what has gone wrong in Iraq. His entire speech was premised on the assumption that there were European troops and Muslim troops and United Nations gendarmes who would have gone to war with us against Saddam had Bush only waited another few days, weeks, months in the spring of 2003. That is a lie. And now, he holds out the same false promise. It is true, he admits, that there is a Security Council resolution calling on U.N. members to provide soldiers and trainers and a special brigade to protect the U.N. mission in Iraq. "Three months later," he admits, "not a single country has answered that call." Of course, Bush is to blame. And what should Bush do? He should "convene a summit meeting of the world's major powers" and "insist that they make good on that U.N. resolution."

There is something risible in Kerry's faith in these hopeless transactions brokered by Kofi Annan and in the United Nations itself, which is staging yet another tragic, do-nothing performance on Darfur. He surely knows there is no cavalry of Europeans and Arabs about to ride to Iraq's rescue (especially since he intends to withdraw American troops, hardly a move that will give other nations confidence). He surely knows there are no foreign funders willing to bear the financial burden, either. But, if he admits that, then much of his critique of Bush's Iraq policy collapses, and with it his confidence in the honorable community of nations—the kind of phrase of which liberals are fond. Except that the nations to which it refers are neither honorable nor a community nor, in many cases, even nations. Kerry may want to rely on their goodwill, but I don't. ■

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The case against George W. Bush: Part III.

Hero Worship

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

PAUL O'NEILL PROBABLY knew what to expect when he showed up for a White House meeting about tax cuts in November 2002. Nearly two years as Treasury secretary should have taught him that the Bush administration never misses an opportunity to cut taxes for the wealthy. And, in case they hadn't, Vice President Dick Cheney clarified the White House's intentions at a meeting earlier in the month. When O'Neill politely suggested to Cheney that a cut in dividend taxes wasn't necessary, as Ron Suskind reports in *The Price of Loyalty*, Cheney coldly informed him, "We won the midterms. This is our due."

Still, not long into the meeting, O'Neill got the impression the president was open to debate on the matter, much to the discomfort of the usual tax-cut proponents, such as Karl Rove, National Economic Council Director Lawrence Lindsey, and Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Glenn Hubbard. George W. Bush asked Lindsey, "Won't the top-rate people benefit the most from eliminating the double taxation of dividends? Didn't we already give them a break at the top?" To Hubbard's reply that action was necessary on the supply side of the economy, Bush snapped, "This is about demand. ... I want this to work."

Then, just as soon as Bush voiced his dissent, Hubbard and Rove talked him down. "Eliminating the double taxation of dividends is a game-changer," Hubbard said, invoking what, according to Suskind, is one of the president's favorite expressions. "You should be basing the package on principle," Rove chimed in. This logic made eminent sense to the president, who considers himself nothing if not principled. "Why do we play our hand now, negotiate against ourselves? I want to stay with principle," Bush said a few minutes later. There, there, Rove seemed to respond, before leading into one of the tactical discussions that always soothed his boss. "We want to dictate the debate, Mister President. Not be too specific out of the box." Pretty soon, the storm clouds had passed. "Good, what I am hearing is that we roll out in mid-December." Rove could barely contain himself. "Stick to principle," he purred.

The episode is vintage Bush. Conventional wisdom holds that the president is a conservative hard-liner bent on upending the Middle East and the U.S. tax code. But, while those may be the practical implications of the decisions he's made as president, the way George W. Bush makes sense of the world isn't through ideology. It's through narrative. Bush has always been a sucker for a good storyline—and never more so than when it involves him. In his own mind, Bush is the central figure in an ever-unfolding series of dramas. As such, Bush prides himself on possessing the qualities of a hero: compassion and justness on the one hand; boldness, principle, and resolution on the other. Bush almost always supports policies that appear to reinforce this image of himself; he opposes policies that appear to contradict it.

To be sure, these are qualities that often make Bush a decent, even likeable human being—as when he extemporaneously came out against legacy admissions (a policy he'd personally benefited from) at a recent conference of minority journalists in Washington, D.C. The problem with Bush's penchant for making decisions based on whether they reinforce his own internal storyline is that, when divorced from logical argument or empirical evidence—neither of which Bush has much patience for (see Franklin Foer, "Closing of the Presidential Mind," July 5 & 12)—narrative is an essentially contentless proposition: You can construct equally compelling narratives to justify either side of just about any decision Bush has had to make as president. The Bush tax cuts could be framed as an effort to upwardly redistribute wealth (as Bush initially presumed) or as a bold, principled plan to turbocharge the economy (as Hubbard and Rove subsequently convinced him). Iraq could be framed as a disastrous departure from the war against Al Qaeda or as an attempt to weaken Islamic fundamentalism at its geographic heart. Unfortunately for the country, during Bush's presidency, it's the advisers who favor the most radical policies who have been most successful at telling their stories.

Without Ideology

BUSH'S APPARENT RELUCTANCE to cut taxes for the wealthy might seem confusing coming from a man whose administration has done more to reward the wealthy than any in history. Then again, Bush has never been an especially ideological man. Pretty much the only real political conviction in evidence throughout his life is a vague cultural conservatism that came as a response to the 1960s. At Yale, Bush was constantly put off by "[p]eople who felt guilty about their lot in life because others were suffering," he explained to *The Dallas Morning News* in 1994. One of the most searing experiences of Bush's early adulthood was an encounter he had with the Yale chaplain, William Sloane Coffin. Not long after George H.W. Bush lost a brutal U.S. Senate campaign in Texas in 1964, Coffin informed W., "Oh, yes, I know your father. Frankly, he was beaten by a better man." The memory of the exchange lingered for years. "What angered me was the way such people at Yale felt so intellectually superior and so righteous,"

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Bush told a *Texas Monthly* reporter in 1994.

Still, these feelings never amounted to anything approaching a coherent worldview, certainly not one that was the product of any thoughtful deliberation. During his senior year at Phillips Andover, a roommate was shocked to find Barry Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative* on Bush's desk. He casually explained that his father had told him to buy a copy. "He was not obsessed by anything, or a cause. He didn't have an agenda, a timetable, a program," one of Bush's former Yale fraternity brothers told Bill Minutaglio, author of the Bush biography *First Son*. On the rare occasion that Bush talked about his post-college plans, they usually entailed getting rich as a stockbroker.

When Bush worked in politics, it wasn't as an activist but as a campaign operative—as the political director of a 1972 Republican Senate campaign in Alabama and later as a paid adviser to his father in 1988. The experiences did little to equip him with the kinds of ideas that might motivate a run for office. If anything, they seemed to make him even less ideological. Asked about his "political agenda for Texas" while flirting with a gubernatorial campaign in 1989, Bush was something less than profound, telling *Texas Monthly*, "I want to affect the lives of people. ... I want to make life better. I think politics is an arena where you can do that." Within the Bush family, George W. was known as the genial backslapper to his brother Jeb's brash ideologue. As "the old man" would later assess the differences between the two sons in his diary: "[W.] is good, this boy of ours. He is uptight at times, feisty at other times—he includes people. He has no sharp edges on issues. He is no ideologue, no divider." When it came to Jeb, by contrast, "He is passionate and caring in his beliefs."

One of the key factors behind George W. Bush's success during the 1994 gubernatorial campaign was his relentless focus on four themes, dubbed the "four food groups" by the Texas press: education, tort reform, juvenile justice, and welfare reform. (This focus had the advantage of providing a concrete agenda while limiting the terrain Bush had to cover during the campaign.) None of these issues, as George H.W. Bush noted, had an especially sharp ideological edge. In fact, on education, the issue in which W. took the most direct personal interest, some of his stands were downright liberal. Bush had come to believe, as he explains in his autobiography, *A Charge to Keep*, that financing schools with property tax revenue was "inherently unfair and unequal, because property values are different in different parts of the state." So, during the 1997 legislative session, he proposed an ambitious overhaul of the state tax system: Cut local property taxes by $3 billion and raise revenue through a sales tax increase and a statewide "business activity" tax. The revenue from these taxes would be used to fund schools more equitably. (Bush ultimately settled for a radically scaled-back $1 billion property tax cut when business groups revolted at the prospect of a steep tax increase.)

If anything, Bush's impulses have been even more scattershot during his presidency. Take Bush's first encounter with Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 16, 2001. The nominal purpose of the meeting was for Bush to lay out his case for missile defense, NATO expansion, and junking the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which is basically what he did. But, after the private discussion with Putin, the president deviated from his talking points. Bush had spent the previous several months talking tough with the Russians and complaining that his predecessor had over-personalized relations with Boris Yeltsin; Condoleezza Rice had explicitly told European allies earlier that spring that the Russians only respected strength. But, during a joint press conference, Bush made a point of referring to Russia as a "partner." Bush also spontaneously invited Putin to visit his ranch in Crawford, Texas (Putin accepted), and, oh yeah, personally vouched for the goodness of Putin's soul. "I found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy," Bush told reporters. "I was able to get a sense of his soul."

All the happy talk was a little dispiriting for the foreign policy commentariat, which alternately bristled at the description of Putin as trustworthy (Zbigniew Brzezinski) and groused that the Crawford visit had been deployed as a gift, not a carrot (Bill Safire). It was lost on no one that our new Russia policy had apparently been based on a mere peek at Putin's immortal spirit. As it happens, though, the reason for the policy shift was even creepier. Bob Woodward tells us in *Bush at War* that Bush was amazed to find Putin wearing a cross his mother had given him. Putin, noticing Bush's reaction, promptly took his cue: "The rest of the story is, is that I was wearing my cross. I hung it on a dacha," he told Bush. "The dacha burned down, and the only thing I wanted recovered was the cross. ... I remember the workman's hand opening, and there was the cross that my mother had given me, as if it was meant to be." "Well, that's the story of the cross as far as I'm concerned. Things are meant to be," Bush assured him, signaling his affirmation. The president appears to have been won over by a Sunday-school homily. And not even a very good one.

Judging from the Putin episode, Bush is a man with preternaturally strong vision. Not "vision thing" vision. The more mundane kind. We know this because, to the extent Bush can be said to make foreign policy, much of it happens on the fly, after emotional personal encounters with key players, at the end of which he invariably looks them in the eye. Bush's assessment of Putin's soul came after he'd "looked the man in the eye." Bush decided to go to the United Nations before invading Iraq mostly because Tony Blair had lobbied him hard for it, and Blair was a man with "cojones." According to Woodward, Bush was able to discern this by looking Blair in the eye. (Not, as you might think, in said cojones.) In late October 2001, as the Afghan campaign appeared to be stalling, Bush made the decision to stick with his original military plan, Woodward notes, after "look[ing] around the table from face to face ... mak[ing] eye contact, maintain[ing] it, saying in effect, 'You're on board, you're with me, right?'" Bush had Central Command General Tommy Franks trek to his Crawford ranch in December 2001 to discuss his options

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in Iraq so he could size up Franks's "body language, [his] eyes, [his] demeanor," writes Woodward.

Even when Bush neglects to make eye contact, his meetings have an emotional dimension that often leads him to shift course abruptly. Writing in *The New Yorker* last December, Connie Bruck reported how Bush became taken with the reformist Palestinian finance minister, Salam Fayyad, when Fayyad, who earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas, arrived at their first meeting with his pinkie and index fingers extended—"In the sign for Texas Longhorns!" according to one Israeli diplomat. "He and Bush got along very, very well," the diplomat recalled. At Fayyad's urging, Bush subsequently demanded that the Israelis release Palestinian tax revenue they had frozen in 2000, telling the Israelis, "It's not your money. Why are you holding it in the first place?" (The Israelis had been convinced that, absent adequate controls, some of the money would end up financing terrorism.)

Bush also became outraged during a July 2003 meeting with then–Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, who presented Bush with a map of the Israeli-built security fence and pressed Bush to condemn it. Bush, again according to Bruck, became so emotional he threw the paper away and shouted, "You'll never have two states with this!" Shortly after the meeting, Bush shocked the Israelis by announcing at a Rose Garden press conference that "I think the wall is a problem. ... It is very difficult to develop confidence between the Palestinians and the [Israelis] with a wall snaking through the West Bank." (Previously, American officials had gently noted their concerns in private.)

Bold and Resolute

Bush's habit of making snap decisions based largely on emotion would obviously be exasperating for an administration official trying to forge coherent policy. Aides have responded by heavily regulating the flow of information to the president. Meetings between Bush and his top officials are almost always choreographed. Woodward notes that "[Rice] liked to deliver the president clear, unambiguous summaries that reflected their thinking. The best way frequently was to orchestrate and script the next day's [National Security Council] meeting. They agreed on who was going to say what, and in what order." Suskind writes in *The Price of Loyalty* (which drew heavily from interviews and documents provided by O'Neill), "Before most meetings, a cabinet secretary's chief of staff would receive a note from someone on the senior staff in the White House. The note instructed the cabinet secretary when he was supposed to speak, about what, and how long. ... [O'Neill] had been in many White Houses. He had never heard of such a thing."

The other reason aides have taken to scripting their interactions with the president is more sinister: It makes it easier to exploit Bush's view of himself as a tough, bold leader. Every other word out of Bush's mouth in the first few days after September 11 reads like a two-bit John Wayne impression. "That's what we're paid for, boys. We're going to take care of this," Bush announced to his staff aboard Air Force One the day of the attacks. "And, when we find out who did this, they're not going to like me as president." Not long after, Bush informed Cheney, "We're going to find out who did this, and we're going to kick their asses." In late October, when intelligence suggested an attack on the White House might be forthcoming, Bush refused to consider leaving, bellowing, "Those bastards are going to find me exactly here."

For top administration aides, this self-image is ripe for manipulation. One could plausibly argue that the bureaucracy most at fault for September 11 was the CIA and that CIA Director George Tenet should have lost his job in the aftermath of the attacks. But Tenet's genius in dealing with Bush after September 11 was to play to the president's preference for bold action. One of Tenet's masterstrokes was to haul his charismatic counterterrorism chief, Cofer Black, into a National Security Council (NSC) meeting to sell the president on the CIA's plan for Afghanistan. Black, who had apparently done an extended tour in a Tom Clancy novel, was fond of saying things like, "When we're through with them, they will have flies walking across their eyeballs," and jumping up from his chair to emphasize a point. "Mister President, we can do this [mission]," he told Bush. "But, you've got to understand, people are going to die." This played perfectly to the president's bold streak. "Let's go. That's war. That's what we're here to win," Bush said.

A few days later, Tenet pressed Bush to launch a covert global war on terrorism, which, he argued, would require ceding the CIA "exceptional authorities" to snatch or kill suspected Al Qaeda operatives and to subsidize foreign intelligence agents. Tenet had titled his detailed proposal "Going to War" and had dramatically affixed a picture of Osama bin Laden with a red diagonal bar through his face to the first page of the document. By the end of the presentation, in which Tenet hopscotched through CIA plans in some 80 countries, senior aides like Donald Rumsfeld were a little uneasy about granting the CIA such broad latitude. But Bush was once again enthralled with the ambitiousness of Tenet's plan. "The president made no effort to disguise what he thought of Tenet's proposals," Woodward reports, "virtually shouting, 'Great job!' " Two days later, Bush approved the CIA request. "We are going to rain holy hell on them. You've got to put lives at risk. We've got to have people on the ground," Bush opined, echoing Tenet's and Black's language.

The problem, of course, was that the plan Bush endorsed didn't actually put many lives at risk—at least not American lives. Instead, it relied heavily on proxy forces, cruise missiles, and high-altitude bombing, which helped bin Laden and his minions slip out of Tora Bora and into Pakistan in December 2001. But Bush couldn't be bothered with details once he had decided the CIA shared his hunger for bold action. Worse, Tenet was able to leverage his risk-taking story into immunity for himself and his agency. As Woodward summarizes Tenet's thoughts after September 11: "The new

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factor was the absence of doubt at the top. Bush displayed no hesitation or uncertainty. ... It was a new ethos for the intelligence business. Suddenly there seemed to be no penalty for taking risks and making mistakes." (This growing affinity between them would later lead the president to accept Tenet's assertion that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction—"It's a slam dunk!"—even though the president found the evidence lacking.)

Other top administration officials have been equally skilled at playing to the president's John Wayne complex. During a discussion of the Iraq war plan between Franks, Rumsfeld, and Bush in January 2002, Franks informed the president that support for Saddam Hussein's government would be directly related to Iraqis' assessment of U.S. intentions: The greater the buildup of U.S. forces in the region, the clearer Bush's commitment to ousting Saddam would be, and the more likely it was that Iraqis would begin to undermine the regime themselves. This made perfect sense. Unfortunately, Franks and Rumsfeld had no idea whether it was actually true, since no one had any intelligence to back it up. But then, who needs intelligence? "Whatever the merits," Woodward writes, "the argument added to the momentum to war. ... [A]s they all knew, little was more appealing to President Bush than showing resolve."

By the summer of 2002, both sides in the internal debate over Iraq had realized that winning over the president required convincing him your position was more action-packed than the alternative. This bias generally favored the hawks, who, after all, wanted to depose a brutal regime half a world away. But not always. Having lost the debate over whether to go to the United Nations on Iraq, Cheney and Rumsfeld were dead-set against calling for a new resolution that would once again demand that Saddam disarm. They complained that the United States would only get bogged down in a "process solution," another Bush buzz phrase. But Powell was up for the fight. "You can't say all of this without asking them to do something," Powell complained when he noticed the call for a resolution missing from a late draft of Bush's U.N. speech. "There's no action in this speech." "He knew that the appeal for action would resonate strongly with Bush," Woodward explains. It did. Bush eventually announced to the world, "We will work with the U.N. Security Council for the necessary resolutions"—this despite Rumsfeld's last-ditch appeal for the president to stand on principle.

The Anti-Clinton

In contrast to Powell and Tenet, other aides have taken a bank-shot approach to dealing with the president, defining what they oppose as weak and timid, and then encouraging the president to do the opposite. This is where Bill Clinton has proved exceptionally useful. Prior to 1992, Bush had understood politics as an ongoing conflict between Middle America and liberal Northern elitists. Clinton, despite not actually being from the North, became the face Bush affixed to this trope following his father's defeat. Much of what Bush did during the '90s was motivated by the idea of himself as a bulwark against creeping Clintonism. In what Minutaglio tells us was partly a dig at Clinton, Bush announced in his 1994 gubernatorial inaugural speech, "For the last thirty years, our culture has steadily replaced personal responsibility with collective guilt." During an annual White House dinner for the nation's governors, Bush informed anybody who would listen that "[Clinton] is in trouble in Texas." In *A Charge to Keep*, Bush condemned the cultural rot he felt Clinton epitomized, writing that, "The changing culture blurred the sharp contrast between right and wrong and created a new standard of conduct: 'If it feels good, do it' and 'If you've got a problem, blame somebody else.'" And, of course, on the campaign trail in 2000, Bush vowed to restore honor and integrity to the Oval Office.

From the earliest days of the administration, Cheney and Rumsfeld became expert at playing the anti-Clinton card with Bush. This had certain tactical implications. During the Afghan war, for example, Rumsfeld would cleverly deploy Bush's pet term for Clinton's antiseptic, cruise-missile approach to war—"pounding sand"—when confronted with a proposal he wanted to derail. ("How does the strategy work domestically? We don't want to look like we are pounding sand," Rumsfeld said in opposing a delay in bombing out of sensitivity to Pakistan. "Rumsfeld knew that [the term] was loaded," Woodward tells us.) But it also had important strategic implications. In *Plan of Attack*, Woodward describes a meeting between Rumsfeld and Bush during the presidential transition period, in which the future defense secretary claimed the Clinton era had been defined by constant retreat from foreign policy threats—"reflexive pullback," in Rumsfeld's lexicon. He argued that the Bush administration should adopt a "forward-leaning" posture, and Bush enthusiastically concurred. Cheney made a variation of this argument after September 11, maintaining that the Clinton administration's indifferent response to each terrorist incident during the '90s essentially invited the next one.

These arguments shaped Bush's thinking, even if he occasionally mangled them. Bush told Woodward in 2002 that he believed the experience of Somalia had paralyzed the Clinton administration, preventing it from taking bold action in places like Afghanistan, where Clinton lobbed a few cruise missiles after the 1998 East Africa Embassy bombings, and Kosovo in 1999, where Clinton bombed Serbian troops from the safe remove of 30,000 feet. ... Wait, Kosovo? Didn't Bush only reluctantly support the Clinton administration's Kosovo campaign—and wasn't his concern that Clinton was *too* aggressive? (As one Bush adviser explained in the September 27, 1999, issue of The New Republic: "We don't believe in this emotional stuff. We don't believe in sending troops all over the place.") Oh, never mind. The important thing is that Kosovo happened on Clinton's watch.

Rumsfeld pressed his Bush-as-anti-Clinton line to begin laying the groundwork for Iraq in the aftermath of September 11. He pointed out that, unlike Afghanistan, Iraq actual-

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ly had targets capable of being hit, which played to Bush's refusal to "put a million-dollar missile on a five-dollar tent," another allusion to Clinton-era cravenness. Rumsfeld also argued that the United States needed to demonstrate it was going on a global offensive, a contrast with the allegedly defensive posture of the Clinton era, which Bush seized on. The ploy worked. On November 21, 2001, with the military portion of the Afghan campaign winding down, Bush took Rumsfeld aside and asked him to begin preparing options for a possible invasion of Iraq.

Indeed, it was arguably Clinton who provided the coup de grâce on Iraq. By early 2003, administration hawks were claiming that, with tens of thousands of troops in the region, failing to invade would deal a devastating blow to U.S. credibility. In January, Rumsfeld told Bush, "The penalty for our country and for our relationships and potentially the lives of some people are at risk if you have to make a decision *not* to go forward." Cheney, according to Woodward, "felt that once the president had laid out his objective of regime change, and begun the process of troop deployments and CIA work, then if they didn't follow through, they would be like Clinton—a lot of bold talk and not much action." The logic had a certain circular beauty: Bush needed to take action up front (i.e., deploy troops), as Franks had advised, to make the war easier if he eventually decided to wage it. But, once he did so, it would constitute a Clinton-like retreat not to follow through with an invasion.

Echoes of Reagan

Bush isn't the first president to make sense of the world by reducing it to simple stories featuring himself in the starring role. As Lou Cannon writes in his definitive Ronald Reagan biography, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, "Reagan's reliance on metaphor and analogy for understanding made him vulnerable to arguments that were short on facts and long on theatrical gimmicks. ... He made sense of foreign policy through his long-developed habit of devising dramatic, all-purpose stories with moralistic messages, forceful plots, and well-developed heroes and villains."

And yet, Reagan's presidency was less spooky than Bush's. One reason is that Reagan was, in some sense, more hands-off—some might say out of the loop—than Bush, which created a vacuum his advisers were forced to fill. That meant ambitious aides couldn't simply exploit the characterological weaknesses of the president. They had to duke it out among themselves in more traditional bureaucratic warfare. The corollary to this is that influential positions within the Reagan administration were more evenly distributed between moderates (like Treasury Secretary Don Regan, Secretary of State George Shultz, Chief of Staff James Baker), and hard-liners (like Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, many of the political appointees at Treasury, and, at least early in his tenure, Office of Management and Budget Director Dave Stockman). Hard-liners won on the 1981 tax cut and the administration's defense buildup; the 1986 tax reform package was a victory for moderates. In the Bush administration, by contrast, the list of high-ranking moderates consisted of O'Neill, Powell, and Christie Whitman, head of the Environmental Protection Agency. O'Neill and Whitman were early casualties. Powell was marginalized from the get-go.

Perhaps more important, the narrative Reagan clung to most stubbornly was, on the one hand, more dada than anything Bush could dream up, but, on the other hand, more detailed in its policy implications. Reagan, as Hendrik Hertzberg points out in his 1991 TNR essay on the Reagan presidency, was obsessed with saving the world from Armageddon, which he understood to mean nuclear holocaust ("The Child Monarch," September 9, 1991). Although the goal was grandiose, Reagan understood it in very concrete terms: eliminating nuclear weapons.

Bush's preferred narratives, by contrast, have always been vague enough to lead to almost any policy. One outgrowth of Bush's image of himself as a heroic leader has been a near-evangelical zeal to spread freedom around the world. Bush's response to Powell's plea in August 2002 about the potentially chaotic consequences of invading Iraq was, "[M]y job is to secure America. ... And that I also believe that freedom is something people long for. And that, if given a chance, the Iraqis over time would seize the moment." Bush told Woodward in December 2003, "I say that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is God's gift to everybody in the world. I believe that. As a matter of fact, I was the person that wrote the line, or said it. I didn't write it, I just said it in a speech. And it became part of the jargon."

But, unlike Reagan's determination to save the world, Bush's Simón Bolívar pretensions are ill-defined. Since restoring freedom in Bush's mind could simply mean toppling a tyrannical regime, it provided zero prescription for action once U.S. forces had ousted the Taliban and Saddam. Rumsfeld, Cheney, and others exploited this vacuum to push their vision of how the military should be employed. In Afghanistan, Rumsfeld and Cheney adamantly opposed using American troops for nation-building, and Bush parroted this argument back to them, unaware of the contradiction with his ostensible desire to build a democratic government. "Look, I oppose using the military for nation-building. Once the job is done, our forces are not peacekeepers," he said at an NSC meeting in mid-October 2001, as the Northern Alliance closed in on Kabul. By January 2003, two months before the invasion of Iraq, Cheney had recognized that establishing democracy was one of Bush's motivations. But, at the same time, the vice president's mantra in internal deliberations was that the United States needed to maintain a "light hand in the postwar phase." Bush, of course, endorsed this "light hand" approach. Partly as a result, the story of Iraq hasn't had a very happy ending—at least not outside the president's mind. Then again, to George W. Bush, that's the venue that's always mattered most. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

To Tell the Truth

TSAI MING-LIANG, BORN IN 1957, is a Taiwanese director of refined sensibility. His film *What Time Is It There?*, about a Taiwanese girl's adventures in Paris, was a series of delicate perceptions. So when I read that Tsai's latest film was a sort of farewell to film, Prospero breaking his staff and so on, I was dismayed to think that this gifted man was giving up his art. Then I saw the film and, to put it ethnically, it is quite a different cup of tea.

GOODBYE DRAGON INN
(Wellspring)

TARNATION
(Wellspring)

GOODBYE DRAGON INN is set in a Taipei film theater that is showing a costume epic full of swordplay, a 1966 opus called *Dragon Inn*. The theater is large, and only a handful of people are in the audience: one is a Japanese man apparently cruising for a pickup, and another is an old man who, we can infer, was an actor in the picture that is up on the screen. The only other person of note is the ticket-taker, a young woman who limps: her steps, as she moves around the concrete-floored theater, are part of Tsai's aural structure. She is played by Chen Shiang-chyi, who was the protagonist of *What Time Is It There?*

Throughout *Goodbye* we get glimpses of the gorgeously arrayed actors on the theater's screen, and most of the dialogue that we hear is from that film, echoing through the huge auditorium and along the concrete corridors around it. The first line of present-time dialogue—*Goodbye* dialogue itself—doesn't come until about halfway through Tsai's film, when one man says to another, "Do you know this theater is haunted?" After *Dragon Inn* finishes, *Goodbye Dragon Inn* concludes. One person leaving the theater says, "Nobody goes to the movies any more." The ticket-seller puts up a sign reading "Temporarily Closed." Then she walks home in the rain.

Most of what Tsai shows us are shots of those corridors and the projection room and various nooks, all cold, bare, and usually empty. Tsai emphasizes, perhaps a bit too strongly, the difference between the ornate film that the theater is showing and the bleak theater itself. The inner film's swashbuckling is contrasted with the almost tangible stasis of the theater shots. In all of Tsai's directing here, there is only one small camera movement, from one person to another. The rest of his work is close to still photography visited occasionally by a few people.

Tsai's film is not free of longueurs, but like much modern work in almost every field, these stretches are deliberate assaults on conventional expectation. Certainly there can come a point where the longueur in such a work simply smothers the artist's intent; but this doesn't quite happen in *Goodbye* because this picture is implicitly a manifesto. The title could hardly be more clear: Tsai is bidding farewell to a certain kind of cinema and is asking the audience to join him in rejecting—let's use the stock term—escape film. He, along with other film-makers, means to replace it with reality—the concrete floors, the dank corridors, the rhythm of the girl's limp, the downpour outside. This shift is hardly news in the world of art. Tsai is simply crystallizing it for film—at any rate, film in Taiwan.

But I'd guess that he is much too subtle to believe that he is replacing fiction with reality. He knows that the facts he has presented about this Taipei theater, where the old-fashioned *Dragon Inn* is being shown, are only a different set of arrangements and selections. Tsai is proposing (he's not the first to do it) that his art should concentrate on more apposite fictions, inquiry rather than escape. He knows that he is nevertheless making a film. And he leaves us wondering about his next picture.

What would Tsai think of **TARNATION**? This is an American autobiographical documentary that reaches toward innermost subjectivity. (The title is curious. It's a New England term for damnation, yet the film is mostly set in Texas: the word is very old-timey, yet the film is bursting with modernity.) The director, Jonathan Caouette, is thirty-one, a film-maker in New York, who comes from an exceptionally disturbed Texas family and who knows its effect on him. In fact, he almost suggests the pride in his background that others have in their own families for quite different reasons.

The picture begins with Caouette in Manhattan today, living a fairly familiar hip gay life, when he learns that Renee—his mother, down in Texas, a woman with a history of mental aberration—has been given a lithium overdose. Distraught, because he adores Renee, he plunges into the history of his family on film. At the age of eleven he had been given a video camera, so he has plenty of material, plus snapshots, plus latter-day interviews, particularly with his mother and grandfather, from which he assembles a somewhat kaleidoscopic chronicle.

The most striking quality of *Tarnation* is that its method is cognate with its subject, a hectic retelling of the hectic. Flashy editing, split screens (sixteen frames are not unusual), interjections out of sequence—all help to make the picture pyrotechnical, galvanized as much by Caouette's impatience with fate as by his talent. Since he made *Tarnation* and is on-screen more than anyone else, he had to justify the ego trip. He keeps working at this, if with slightly facile frankness. In some of the sections about his mother, I was reminded of the work of Diane Arbus, for me one of the most overrated of photographers, whose exploitations of the bizarre are thinly buttered with weltschmerz. Still, Caouette is not a tourist of bizarreness: he is agonizing from the inside of a troubled family.

Again, what would Tsai think of *Tarnation*? Would he think that a baby had

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been emptied out with the bath? That candor cannot supplant everything else? With all sympathy for the travails of Renee's life, electroshock treatments among them, can a point come in which the very telling of truth is taken as justification for telling it? Caouette has opened up a case history vividly, but he has left us without any conclusions, not even with much enlightening empathy. Something more than truth—dare one say "mere truth"?—is needed. ■

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Keeping Company With Kaufman

KAUFMAN & CO. (LIBRARY of America, $35) is a selection of nine Broadway plays written between 1926 and 1939 by George S. Kaufman, in partnership with four of his collaborators—Edna Ferber, Moss Hart, Ring Lardner, and Morrie Ryskind. (A philanderer in marriage, Kaufman was equally faithless with his writing partners, though he remained true to one producer, Sam Harris.) If this canonizing volume is not exactly a publishing event equivalent in magnitude to the collected novels of Melville or the complete plays of O'Neill, it is nevertheless a valuable compendium of the wit of a bygone age. "Wit" is perhaps too delicate a word to describe the verbal acrobatics of this German-descended, Pittsburgh-born, Broadway-trained Jew. Kaufman was one of the regulars at the Algonquin Round Table, whose resident sophisticates included Alexander Woollcott, Robert Benchley, and Dorothy Parker. But whereas these notables were authentic wits, Kaufman was a master of that peculiarly American semantic known as the wisecrack. (He may have practiced the form in the newsroom during his years as drama editor for *The New York Times*.) Typical of Kaufman's wisecracks was his rejoinder to Irving Berlin after hearing him sing "Always": "Always is a long time. Shouldn't it be called 'I'll be loving you Thursday?' " Berlin was not amused.

If this sounds Groucho Marxist, that is because Kaufman was to comic writing what Groucho was to comic acting, a hard-nosed commentator on romantic conventions with no more than half an ounce of sentiment in his emaciated body. Aside from the impatient antagonism they shared toward the stupid and the square, the two men had the same knack for insult humor, the same insolent insouciance, even the same bushy eyebrows and frizzy hair. Indeed, Kaufman was personally responsible for a number of the puns, word quibbles, and wisecracks that poured deadpan out of Groucho's throat. He had a hand in such Marx Brothers classics as *A Day at the Races* and *A Night at the Opera*, and he had two hands and a foot in the early plays that brought them to Hollywood—*The Cocoanuts* and *Animal Crackers*.

Only the stage version of *Animal Crackers* is included here, published for the first time in a text based on a typescript Groucho left to the Library of Congress. Those of us who believe *Animal Crackers* to be the purest of the Marx Brothers movies will be grateful to have the full-length play, written in 1928 in collaboration with Morrie Ryskind. (Ryskind went on to adapt the movie without Kaufman's help.) And while both versions revolve around Groucho's Captain Spaulding, the African explorer ("Did someone call me schnorrer?"), and both feature his continuing mistreatment of the imperturbable dowager Mrs. Rittenhouse (played on stage and screen by the magnificent Margaret Dumont) and the fate of a purloined painting, on screen a number of the play's characters have been cut or renamed (such as Mrs. Rittenhouse's butler Hives) or combined (Doucet the French art dealer is conflated in the film with the newspaper magnate Roscoe W. Chandler, a.k.a. Ivan, the Fish-Peddler). A lot of this tailoring improves the work: surely the movie is better off without the play's tiresome climactic interlude set in a

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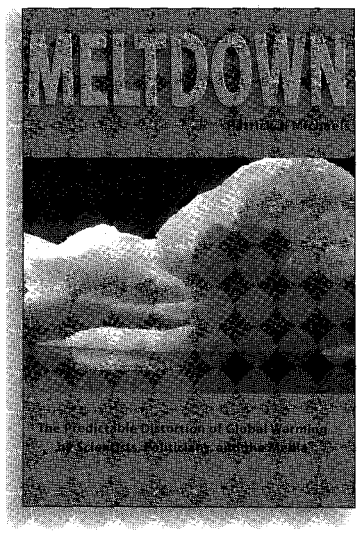

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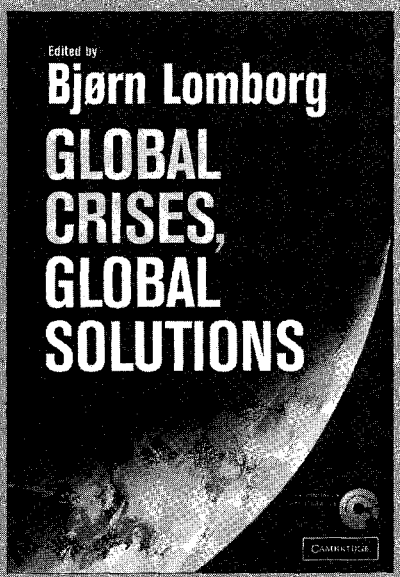

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French garden with Groucho cast as Louis XV.

But whereas Ryskind had a stronger grasp of form than Kaufman, a superior sense of visual humor, and a more anarchic imagination (he probably wrote those surrealistic exchanges between Chico as Ravelli and Harpo as the Professor that inspired Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*), he was also a lot more commercial-minded. When he adapted the Ferber-Kaufman play *Stage Door* for the movies, Ryskind turned a passionate defense of stage performance as opposed to the "piecework" of movie acting, into a saccharine opportunity for Katharine Hepburn to vibrate over how "the calla lilies are in bloom." (I'm still trying to figure out the link between Ryskind's half-manic, half-sentimental style and his unpredictable evolution into one of the founders of *National Review*.)

Kaufman refused to work on the movie adaptation of *Stage Door*. Indeed, his attitude toward Hollywood was always laced with contempt. He spent some time at MGM, lured there by Irving Thalberg. But like his character Lawrence Vail, who has a breakdown from "underwork" in *Once in a Lifetime* (a part he directed himself in on Broadway), Kaufman resented being the studio's forgotten man and felt that the "whole business was in the hands of incompetents." By contrast, his love of the theater was unconditional. Those who sold out to Hollywood for fame or money, like the message playwright Keith Burgess in *Stage Door* (a character transparently based on Clifford Odets), earned his unqualified contempt. Burgess may pretend to serve the "masses" when he ends a play with "Strike! Strike! Strike!" (as Odets did in *Waiting for Lefty*), but as soon as this Hollywood Marxist begins drawing a big studio paycheck, the "masses" get redefined as the "eighty million people" who buy tickets to his movies.

KAUFMAN GOT NOTHING OUT of Hollywood aside from his own paychecks, unless you count a prolonged affair with the movie actress Mary Astor and the privilege of being named as a corespondent in her divorce. Instead he returned to Broadway, where he continued to exercise his acerbic tongue (something he might have described as the principal language of Yugoslavia). Even though Kaufman famously described satire as "what closes on Saturday night," he principally wrote satirical comedies, most of which lasted at least until Thursday. I'm kidding: a lot of them were considerable successes, and *Of Thee I Sing* ran for a record 837 performances. If Ryskind invented farcical ideas for *Animal Crackers* and *Of Thee I Sing*, and Ring Lardner contributed the working-class story and some idiomatic dialogue ("You know me, Al") to *June Moon*, and Edna Ferber helped with plot lines and character development for *The Royal Family*, *Dinner at Eight*, and *Stage Door*, and Moss Hart provided the humanizing structures of *Once in a Lifetime*, *You Can't Take It With You*, and *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, Kaufman was usually the one responsible for identifying the satiric object and nailing it to the door like a coonskin cap.

In *The Royal Family* (1926–1927), the satire is on show-business royalty such as the Barrymores, on whom the Cavendishes are closely based. (Ethel Barrymore, asked to play herself in the production, responded by threatening legal action.) The flamboyant Tony Cavendish, in his dashing fur coat and rakish fedora, is modeled on John Barrymore, a great compromised actor who seems to have obsessed Kaufman—he is referred to often in the plays and shows up again as the alcoholic movie star Larry Renault, the "Great Profile" of *Dinner at Eight*. (Unlike Ethel, John had no compunction about playing even an unflattering version of himself when that show was turned into a movie.) Like so many Kaufman plays, *The Royal Family* establishes a contrast and a conflict between free-living bohemians and the straitlaced, stiff-necked, share-owning pillars of society. Typical of these is Gil (a stock character usually played in the movies by Ralph Bellamy), who deeply disapproves of what he calls "insubstantial show people." Kaufman finds a lot to ridicule in them as well, but by the end he has exalted the Cavendishes into enduring icons of strength and unconventionality. Indeed, the only time he ever seems to turn soft is when he is writing about the stage.

In *June Moon* (1929), perhaps the most dated play in the collection, Kaufman is satirizing the songwriting industry, hardly a serious menace to society. The play is noteworthy mainly as the first of a number of his plots (perhaps autobiographical) in which a hero, blinded by success, betrays his true love. In *Once in a Lifetime* (1930), Kaufman does an-

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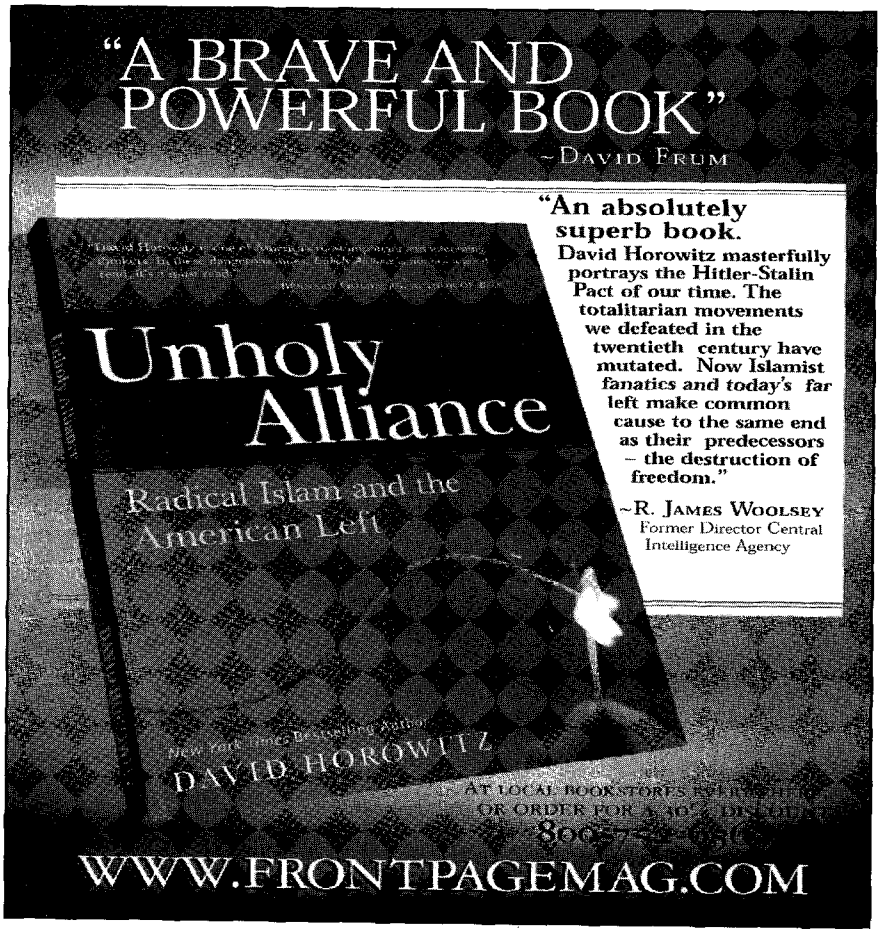
other number on Hollywood, characterized as a land of chauffeurs and wolfhounds. In this prophetic work about the "talkies" revolution, the squares are the movie folk and the sophisticates are from Broadway. Glogauer, the vulgar Hollywood producer, is an enemy of good writing whose overriding objective is to protect himself from talent. ("Everywhere I go, they act at me!") A businessman only interested in grosses, Glogauer can easily fall for a dimwit adviser like George Lewis, even when he spends a fortune making the wrong movie. It turns out to be a hit, proving that the dumber the advice, the more successful the product. *Once in a Lifetime* recalls an ancient time when movies were adapted from what used to be called "the legitimate theater," as opposed to the present, when Broadway musicals are based on Hollywood movies; a time when film stole talent from the theater instead of vice versa; a time when showmen considered themselves shamans, and could condescend to lowbrow studio philistines. Today, it is not so easy to identify which is the more compromised art.

Of Thee I Sing (1931) is a satire on politics with a rousing score by Ira and George Gershwin (both shamefully excluded from the show's Pulitzer Prize). In this musical, the same boobs who are buying tickets to the movies are electing politicians, and the hucksters are once again suckering the innocent. John P. Wintergreen runs for president on a love platform that gives hundreds of women the opportunity to compete in a beauty contest for first lady. When he secretly marries a non-contestant, the winner, a Louisiana woman with a French name, sues him for breach of promise. France thereupon threatens war, in the same comic-operetta way Sylvania challenges Freedonia in *Duck Soup*. The true comic character of the play, however, is the vice president, Alexander Throttlebottom, whom nobody knows or recognizes: a kind of Lawrence Vail of the White House, cooling his heels outside the executive office. Not a part tailored to the talents of Dick Cheney.

Dinner at Eight (1932) is Kaufman's most serious play, an early *Upstairs/Downstairs*–type satire on the social pretensions of the wealthy classes. It is also his cruelest work, with virtually no redeeming character. Millicent Jordan, who condescends to the obligatory colored maid, believes she has snared a brace of British royalty for dinner, and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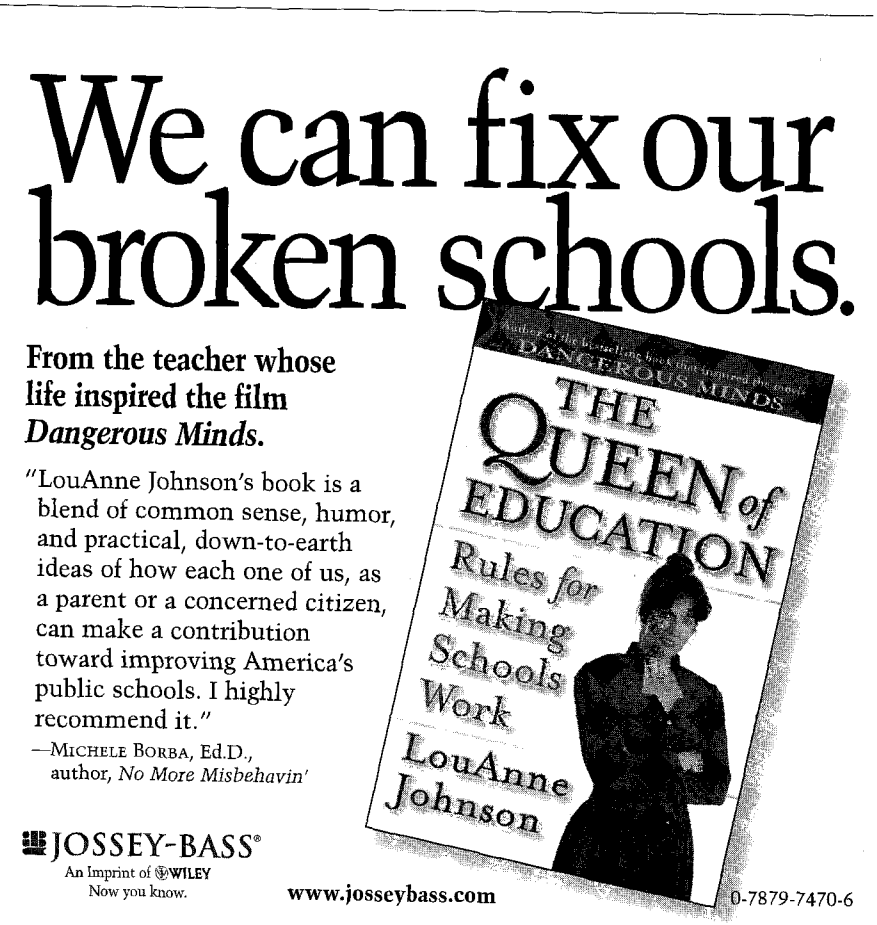
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is in the process of compiling a distinguished guest list. When most of the invitees, starting with the Brits, fall out on her for one reason or another, the play ends up looking very much like the third act of *The Cherry Orchard*, where only the postman and the stationmaster show up for the festivities. It is an uncharacteristically dark play, which the suicide of the penniless, drunken has-been Larry Renault makes even bleaker.

Stage Door (1936) is another anti-Hollywood play, about a girl's dormitory full of theater hopefuls, some of whom end up as "camera fodder," while others remain steadfastly loyal to the theater regardless of the sacrifices. "The theater may be slow and heartbreaking," the stagestruck heroine is told at the climax, "but if you build solidly you've got something at the end of seven years, and seventeen years, and twenty-seven.... And what's John Barrymore got? A yacht!" It is Kaufman's most unabashed paean to the Broadway stage.

You Can't Take It With You (1936) and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (1939) are the Kaufman plays that are most often revived, usually in summer stock. The first is another tribute to the bohemian lifestyle, featuring a somewhat relentlessly eccentric family named Vanderhof, among them Grandpa, who doesn't pay his taxes; Paul, who experiments with fireworks in the basement; Penelope, who writes and paints; Ed, who prints subversive pamphlets; and two kittens named Groucho and Harpo. The complication is provided by the stuffy, easily shocked bourgeois parents of Penelope's suitor, whose work ethic is challenged by the fun ethic of the Vanderhofs. It is a family conflict in the tradition of *Romeo and Juliet* as channeled through *Abie's Irish Rose*.

The Man Who Came to Dinner is clearly Kaufman's masterpiece. In the bullying intellectual snob Sheridan Whiteside, "critic, lecturer, wit, radio actor," Kaufman had found his greatest opportunity since *Animal Crackers* for exercising his insult muscles, also displaying an underused capacity for genuine wit. Based on Alexander Woollcott (who refused to play the part for personal reasons), Whiteside was embodied on stage and screen by Yale drama professor Monte Woolley, and sixty-odd years later I can still hear him growling "I may vomit" and hissing the word "peachy" through his yellow teeth and Santa Claus beard. Whiteside became the personification of what would later be called "elite" attitudes toward middle-class values, and Kaufman made no effort to curb his waspish tongue or unpleasant manner—well, maybe a little, in the contrived if hilarious ending that has a character based on Noël Coward disposing of a character based on Gertrude Lawrence in order to unite the lovers. And in the character of Banjo, obviously modeled on Harpo Marx (though played in the movie by Jimmy Durante), the playwright reprises some of the non sequitur humor with which his career began: "Come to my room in half an hour," mutters Banjo to a female prey, "and bring some rye bread."

Laurence Maslon has compiled this collection with love and care, though his references are occasionally incomplete (he fails, for some reason, to identify who staged most of the plays). But I wish Maslon had been a little less modest and collected his informative back-of-the-book notes into an extended introduction. Read together, these nine plays provide an authoritative if incomplete sociology of American manners, culture, and politics in the 1920s and 1930s (there are surprisingly few references to Prohibition, and even fewer to the Great Depression). It was a time when issues were clearer, conflicts were sharper, and characters were better defined. Dying of heart failure in 1961, Kaufman never got to experience the period known as the 1960s. Too bad. We could have used his jaundiced perspective on that problematic decade. Not to mention on the thuggish period we're slogging through now. ■

Gertrude Himmelfarb
Whigged Out

Herbert Butterfield: Historian as Dissenter
By C. T. McIntire
(Yale University Press, 499 pp., $47.50)

There was a time, a few generations back (as generations are counted in the academy), when every self-respecting graduate program in history had as its prerequisite a course in "historical methods." One of the texts in that course, and by far the most memorable one, was a little book called *The Whig Interpretation of History*, by the English historian Herbert Butterfield, originally published in England in 1931 and re-issued repeatedly there and in this country. Aspiring historians became adept at discovering, in works of history that may have had nothing to do with Whigs, the telltale signs of the "Whig interp," as it was familiarly known: reading the past in terms of the present, and seeing history as the inevitable progress toward liberty and modernity. By the same token, some of the most distinguished members of the profession (in all fields of history) were found guilty of the "Whig fallacy," passing moral judgments on characters and events in the past.

Today *The Whig Interpretation of History*, once a staple of historical criticism, is virtually unknown among students, and dismissed or belittled by many historians. Yet it still raises fundamental issues that are ignored at some peril, by those who would reconstruct history in accord with their own ideological agendas, or who would deconstruct it on the theory that the past has no reality apart from the present. The Whig interpretation is alive and well, in ways that Butterfield may not have anticipated but would surely have deplored.

The problem is that Butterfield himself, who died in 1979, is hardly a sure guide through the thickets of history, let alone through the ongoing history that we call the present. As this first biography of him abundantly (if sometimes unwittingly) demonstrates, there are worse fallacies than the Whig fallacy. The biography is also something of a revelation for those of us who not only have read Butterfield seriously but also knew him personally, and who may be distressed

Gertrude Himmelfarb is the author, most recently, of The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments *(Knopf).*

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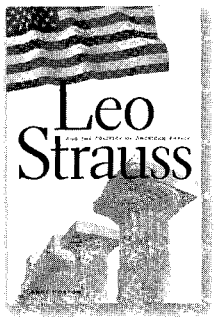

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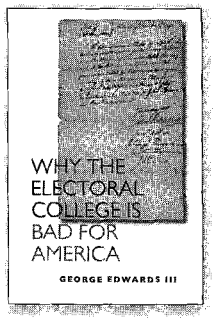

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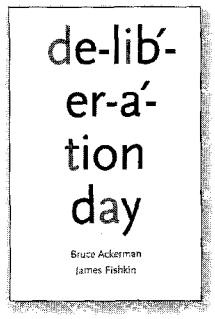

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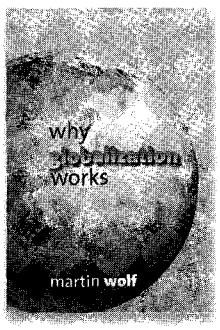

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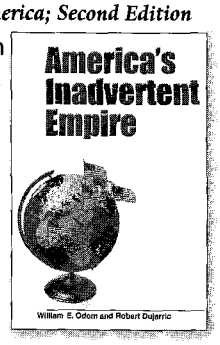

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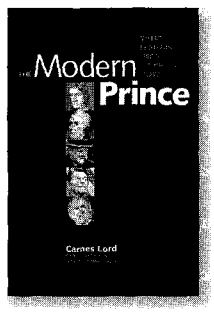

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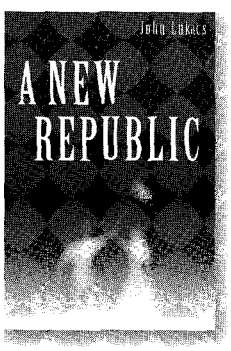

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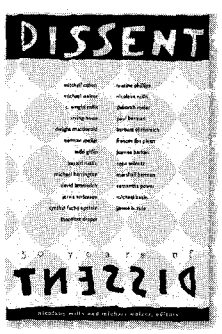

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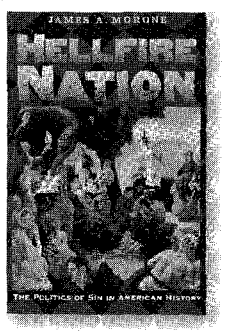

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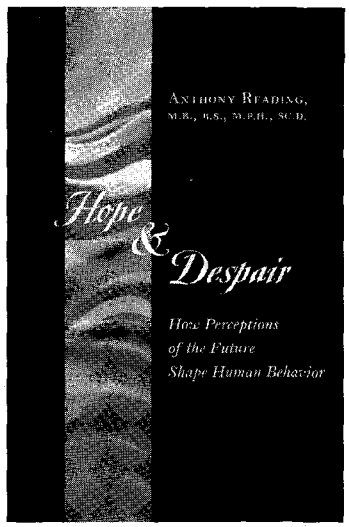

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to find aspects of him, as a historian and as a public figure, that we have been ignorant of or, perhaps, have generously forgotten.

Yet there is nothing muckraking or sensationalistic about C. T. McIntire's book. On the contrary, it is, if not an officially authorized biography, certainly an authoritative one. McIntire interviewed Butterfield at length in the years before his death, had access to all his papers, and has produced a sympathetic yet meticulously analytical and not at all hagiographical account of his life and his work. We can now take the measure of Butterfield both as a historian and as a public intellectual, a role that sometimes overshadowed his professional work. We are also—and this is no small virtue of this book—brought back to an England very different from the Churchillian England of fond memory. If we are now obliged to reconsider Butterfield, we may need to reconsider the academic milieu in which he lived and thrived, and the larger world that received him so hospitably and honored him so amply.

THE *WHIG INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY* was not, as one might think from its assured yet casual tone, the work of a mature scholar reflecting upon his craft. It appeared in 1931, when Butterfield was thirty years old, a fellow at Peterhouse, Cambridge. His only publications before this were a prize essay written as a student on the set topic of the historical novel, a brief article in the *Cambridge Historical Journal* previewing the book he was then writing, and the book itself, *The Peace Tactics of Napoleon, 1806–08*, published in 1929. This monograph, the equivalent of a doctoral dissertation (like most of his contemporaries in Britain, Butterfield did not actually take that degree), was the only full-length scholarly book that he was to produce in the following two decades. Covering a period of eighteen months, and based largely on published documents, with very little archival research, it came as close as anything he ever wrote to being the "scientific," technical history that he espoused. It was this book that earned him an appointment as university lecturer in 1930. It was also his credential, so to speak, for the provocative work that he published the following year.

The Whig Interpretation of History, an essay of one hundred thirty pages, boldly challenged what Butterfield took to be the prevailing mode of historical discourse: "the tendency in many [British] historians to write on the side of Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, to emphasize certain principles of progress in the past, and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present." For the Whig, history was a linear, incremental process, a victory of light over darkness, a search for origins leading to an end, and above all an occasion for moral judgments. The alternative non-Whig history professed to offer not an explanation of what happened, but rather a detailed narrative account of what happened. Yet this, too, Butterfield insisted, had its drama, "the romance of historical research":

> The historian's passion for manuscripts and sources is not the desire to correct facts and dates ... but the desire to bring himself into genuine relationship with the actual, with all the particularities of chance and change.... The true historical fervour is the love of the past for the sake of the past.... The true historical fervour is that of the man for whom the exercise of historical imagination brings its own reward, in those inklings of a deeper understanding, those glimpses of a new interpretative truth, which are the historian's achievement and his aesthetic delight.

McIntire endorses some of the criticisms made of the book at the time and since: it is rambling and repetitive, consisting of assertions rather than arguments, with no footnotes and few quotations to support the assertions, and sometimes committing moral judgments of its own. Other historians have been even more disparaging. J. H. Plumb described it as "a very short book—short enough to hold the attention of a moderately industrious sixth-former." David Cannadine dismissed it as "slight, confused, repetitive, and superficial." And E. H. Carr found it remarkable because it denounced the Whig interpretation without naming "a single Whig except Fox, who was no historian, or a single historian save Acton, who was no Whig."

In Cambridge, what made the book food for gossip was its implicit attack on George Trevelyan, the Regius professor of modern history and the most eminent historian in England. Butterfield protest-

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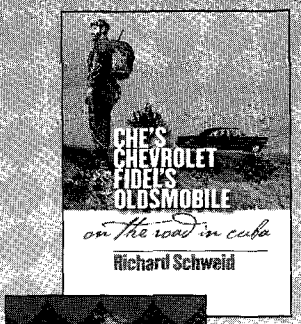
ed that his book was directed not against Trevelyan but against the long-dead Lord Acton. But his description, early in the book, of the Whig historian as "Protestant, progressive and Whig, and the very model of the nineteenth-century gentleman" surely referred to Trevelyan and not Acton, who was neither Protestant nor a Whig, nor, in many respects, "progressive." It is a tribute to Trevelyan, to his good nature and his generosity, that he encouraged Butterfield to write the book that he himself had planned to write, a biography of Charles James Fox, the leader of the liberal faction in Parliament in the late eighteenth century, and then handed over to him a trove of Fox letters in his possession.

That project, the Fox biography, remained the center of Butterfield's scholarly ambitions for twenty years and would have provided a test case for his non-Whig interpretation of history. Like so many other of his undertakings, this one remained unwritten. In 1951, after publishing *George III, Lord North and the People* (which covered a very short period in Fox's life) and realizing that he would never write that biography, Butterfield, upon Trevelyan's urging, turned over the Fox manuscripts to the British Museum.

THERE WAS MUCH TO DISTRACT Butterfield—his lectures, of course, but also the political ambience of that time and place. Cambridge in the 1930s is remembered today as a hive of communist theorists, activists, and not least spies. Butterfield was not a member of these circles, although he was not impervious to them. Maurice Dobb, the founding father of British Marxism and a charter member of the British Communist Party, was at Trinity College for the whole of the time that Butterfield was at Peterhouse. It was from Dobb (and not from Marx, whom he gave no indication of having read) that Butterfield gained what knowledge he had of Marxism, and perhaps the sympathy reflected in his essay on Marxist history in 1933. He did not subscribe to Marxism, he said, as an interpretation of the course of history, but he did commend it as a valuable method for the study of history, its "structural analysis" of the economic and material conditions of society being more faithful to the complexity of history than the individualistic narrative account of the Whig historian.



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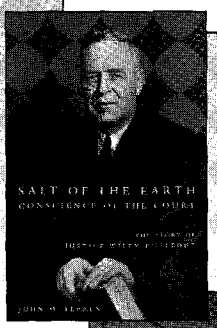

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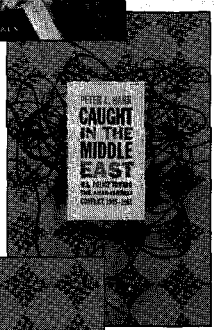

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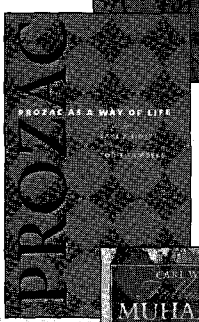

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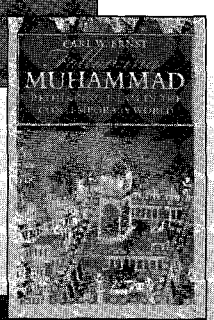

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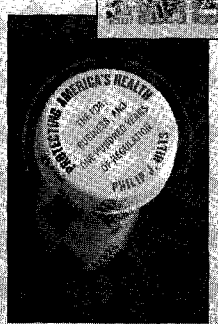

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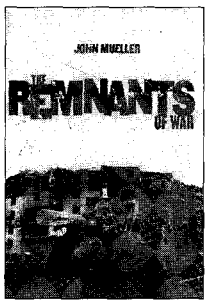

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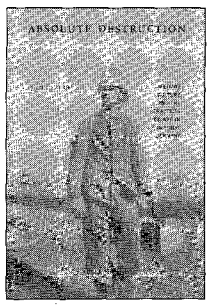

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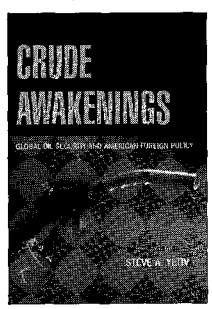

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Butterfield repeated this argument in 1949 and again in 1951, praising Marxism as a corrective to "ordinary political narrative"—an odd commentary on his own two works of history, which were essentially political narratives. Maurice Cowling (who was later Butterfield's colleague at Peterhouse) interpreted the 1933 essay as an "unconscious compact" that Butterfield made with those of his pupils who were sympathetic to Marxism. This explanation would also account for his later essays, when Marxism was still more popular in the university. (By then Dobb had produced an entire school of Marxist historians and Communist Party members, including Eric Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson.)

BUTTERFIELD HIMSELF WAS NOT a Marxist, let alone a communist, but he was very much a part of another political disposition prevalent in Cambridge in the 1930s: appeasement. Oxford is more often associated with that tendency, thanks to the famous motion passed by the Oxford Union, one month after Hitler came to power, "not to fight for King and Country." All Souls, the most prestigious of the Oxford colleges, had among its fellows Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of the *Times* and a prominent spokesman for appeasement, and Lord Halifax, the chancellor of the university and foreign secretary under Chamberlain. But Cambridge also had its share of appeasers, some of whom had the privilege of belonging to the secret (or not-so-secret) undergraduate society known as the Apostles. Trevelyan, an Apostle of an earlier generation, defended appeasement on purely prudential grounds, combining it, as others did not, with a vigorous denunciation of Hitler, support of a strong re-armament program, and, after the outbreak of the war, a strong commitment to the war and a public acknowledgment that Churchill had been right and he and his fellow appeasers had been "blind and foolish." (He also helped found, in 1933, an organization to assist Jewish émigré scholars in England.)

Butterfield's appeasement was very different, based not on the practical realities of the situation but rather on what he took to be the proper historical attitude. "I do not defend the Fascists for being violent," a diary entry in 1936 reads, "but I wish that the enemies of the Fascists could be more gentle. Though we may regard a certain doctrine as

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working to corrupt and degrade the world, it is our duty to understand that doctrine, and to give sympathy and imagination to those people who have been seduced by it." It was in this spirit of "sympathy and imagination" that he accepted an invitation, in December 1938 (after the Nazi invasions of Austria and Czechoslovakia), to lecture at four German universities.

His host in Berlin was a historian, Hans Galinsky, who had earlier visited England for the express purpose of recruiting English scholars to the Nazi cause. After the war, when Galinsky was removed from his position at the University of Strasbourg, Butterfield wrote references for him for appointments in Germany. He disapproved of Galinsky's views on Nazism, he explained, but could understand how he had arrived at them. "I always thought that his case was one that could be humanly explained.... I did not think him unreasonable in his love of his own country.... If I thought that he had, perhaps, an excessive love of his country, I don't think he had more of it than many men of other countries, including our own."

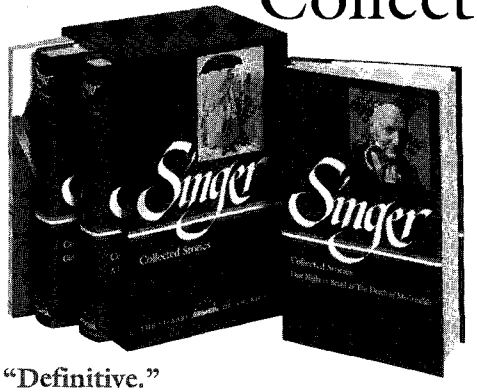
This note of moral equivalence—equating the Nazi's love of his country, even an "excessive" love of his country, with the Englishman's—was Butterfield's characteristic response to Germany before, during, and after the war. "Fight the Germans—yes, certainly, if we have to," a diary entry in 1940 reads. "Fight to save human beings from oppression or even to save the homeland from being invaded by foreigners, however virtuous. But do not think of them or treat them as subhuman.... Let us say rather: 'What did we do wrong? What could we have done to prevent the Germans from feeling that they must turn to Hitler?' " Among his colleagues, McIntire reports, Butterfield had the reputation of having "fascist tendencies" and being "soft on Nazis." J. H. Plumb, who was a fellow at Cambridge at the time, remembered him as "critical of the Spanish Republicans, sympathetic, very, to Franco ... [and] completely neutral to Hitler."

McIntire, putting a somewhat better face on it, interprets Butterfield's characterization of Napoleon as a "tyrant," in a little book he wrote on the eve of the war, as an implicit reference to Hitler, intended to "support the emerging British position against Nazi tyranny." But there is little evidence of such support. Nor is it clear that Butterfield "joined the fight against Hitler," as McIntire says, if only "on his own terms, as the dissenter and in a way that comported well with his dictates on moral judgments." His "own terms," evidently, did not require any government service. He was the only one of four fellows in Peterhouse to remain in Cambridge throughout the war without doing any kind of service. When another historian proposed to leave Newnham College for a government post, he strongly advised her not to do so, and never forgave her when she did. And when he felt called upon to organize two conferences of refugee historians at Peterhouse in 1942 and 1943, he was annoyed to find that the refugees were more interested in combating the Germans than in taking the properly neutral "academic view," and he canceled the conference scheduled for the following year. In 1943, he was reported to have favored a separate negotiated settlement with Hitler. Visiting Dublin that year as an external examiner at the university, he saw nothing amiss in going to parties at the German consulate (Ireland being neutral during the war).

A LITTLE BOOK PUBLISHED BY Butterfield in 1944 seemed to suggest something like a conversion on his part. *The Englishman & His History*, an essay of about the same length as *The Whig Interpretation*, acquired something of the same notoriety as the earlier essay, if only because it appeared to contradict it. "*Das Herbert Butterfield Problem,*" the historian J. G. A. Pocock has dubbed it (echoing "*Das Adam Smith Problem,*" the famous German rendition of the supposed inconsistency between Smith's two major works). E. H. Carr (who was himself a staunch appeaser, first of Nazism and then of Stalinism) mocked the emergence of a "deutero-Butterfield" in place of the "proto-Butterfield" of the earlier book.

Where *The Whig Interpretation of History* had posited a break between past and present, so that the past could be understood entirely on its own terms, Butterfield now portrayed the past as thoroughly imbued with the present: a past "coiled up inside the present," a past "used to assist our purposes," a "marriage" of past and present. He reconciled

Isaac Bashevis Singer
Collected Stories



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the two books by distinguishing between Whig statesmen and Whig historians, the former "always so much greater" then the latter. But by his own account it was the Whig interpretation itself that helped to create the England he was now celebrating, an interpretation not invented by historians but part of the English mind and the very "landscape" of English life. "We are all of us exultant and unrepentant Whigs," including those, he added ruefully, who, "perhaps, in the misguided austerity of youth," had tried to drive out that Whig history.

Yet there were still echoes of the "proto-Butterfield" in the "deutero-Butterfield." The argument against moral judgments now took the form of an argument for Providence. Providence had appeared in *The Whig Interpretation* as well, although less insistently (and not capitalized). Now it was invoked (and capitalized) as a major force in history. With it there emerged the religious theme that was to occupy Butterfield more and more in later years: the relationship between Christianity and history.

The Paris of Stories

A specific passage in which the hero, painted blue,
howls in southern trees, that is, southern

France, and somebody says the City of Light
is this way, but you get close and it's getting darker along

the woody banks where statice and columbine
figure in a tale the apostle

of rationalism is telling to the converts,
who say this all happened before,

but then the apparent elaboration—the sunset, we mean—
striped like a figure of ridicule,

but brilliant, fucking sublime, the desperation turning to
  quality yellow
on our faces, the way

earth time includes these confusing generous passages,
gets to us, or to the one operating the ferry,

who leans back and lets his knotty fingers
trail in the water, thinking of his little life, so sweet to him.

CHARLIE SMITH

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE, and properly so, of Butterfield's Methodist upbringing and convictions. Raised in a Yorkshire working-class family with strong ties to the chapel, he became a lay preacher at the age of sixteen and continued to do occasional preaching in the Cambridge circuit, first as a student and then as a fellow and university lecturer. He ceased preaching in 1936—except, one might say, in the guise of historian. Certainly, the rhetoric and the passion of the preacher were evident in his repeated invocation of Providence as a rebuke to those self-righteous, moralizing men who tried to interfere with the natural, organic "historical process" that was the genius of the English (and, as he now saw it, the Whig) tradition.

It was this providential view that governed Butterfield's attitude toward politics as much as history, reflected in his policy of appeasement and in his persistently conciliatory attitude to Hitler. In one of only two passing references to Hitler in *The Englishman and His History* (this in the middle of the war), Butterfield linked him with Napoleon as one of the "new men" who think that they can become "monarchs and masters of the course of things." But it was not only such new men who were especially "prone to this form of presumption." So were those Englishmen "presumptuous" enough to think that they could usurp the role of Providence by imposing their own moral judgments and trying to "remodel the world to their hearts' desire."

A quarter of a century later, in the preface to a reprint of *The Englishman and His History*, Butterfield said that the excessive patriotism in that book now struck him as "comic." But he was apparently beginning to find it excessive almost immediately, to judge by the inaugural lecture delivered only a few months later upon his appointment as professor of modern history at Cambridge. The appointment itself was remarkable, considering the paucity of his scholarly writings. (Unlike the American plenitude of professorships of history, that exalted title in an English university is rare.) More remarkable were some of his observations in that lecture. With the war still in a precarious state, he took the opportunity, while criticizing Nazi and Fascist totalitarianism, to urge his countrymen to extend an "imaginative sympathy" not only to Nazis, whose loyalty to Germany, he said, resembled the patriotism of Englishmen (including himself), but also to those who "for some reason have fallen in love with a foreign power"—presumably German sympathizers in England. It is no wonder that he won the reputation in Cambridge, as McIntire says, of being "pro-German" or "Germanophile."

What is extraordinary—and what makes Butterfield's biography an interesting episode in the recent history of England—is that this tolerant view of the enemy should have been received not only with equanimity but with apparent enthusiasm by the English public. His lectures on Christianity and history, delivered in Cambridge in 1948, broadcast the following year on the BBC, printed in *The Listener*, and published as a book, were enormously successful. Citing repeatedly the precept that "all men are sinners," and its corollary that "self-righteousness" is the worst sin, Butterfield again warned against the presumptuousness of passing moral judgments on the actors of history or trying to control the course of history. Men, nations, and political systems were all equal before God, and equal in their potentiality for sin. Hitler and Stalin, like all political leaders, were confronted not with a choice between good and evil, but with a series of "predicaments," and it is these predicaments, not the will, the intentions, or the ideas of men, that determine the course of history.

"Providence" and "predicaments" now emerged as Butterfield's watchwords. From this neutral perspective, he found the differences between the pro-Munich and anti-Munich factions, for example, like "the quarrels of Tweedledum and Tweedledee." The book concluded with the simple dictum: "Hold to Christ, and for the rest be totally uncommitted." It was an oddly quietistic message for a country that had just won a war as a result of the conscious and resolute actions of its leaders and people.

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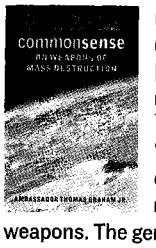

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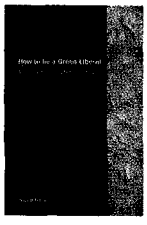

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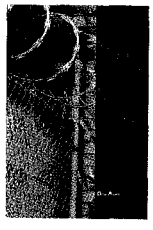

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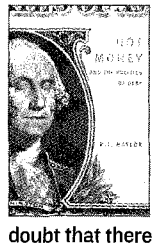

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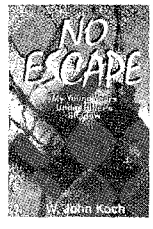

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In another lecture at about the same time, Butterfield extended this spirit of Christian forbearance to the writing of biographies. Thus the life of "the worst of murderers" could be written in such a way as to make him the "hero" of the story, so that "our pity and sympathy would be around him as we followed him up from childhood." Such a book, by "a person who did not hate him too much," would enable the reader to see how "a lump of human nature (how a boy playing in a field) could ever have come to be *like that*." (In one of Butterfield's last lectures, the country boy was transformed into a city boy: "It would be good if a historian could explain to us how a boy of ten, playing in a city street, could have come to be like that—the historian behaving like a mother who sadly has to observe how a son of hers is going wrong.")

By mid-century, and by the age of fifty, Butterfield had become something of a celebrity. In the single month of October 1949, three of his books were published: *Christianity and History; The Origins of Modern Science, 1300–1800*; and *George III, Lord North and the People, 1779–1780*. The book on science, like so many of his others, was based on a series of lectures and had some of the characteristics of that genre: it was repetitive, imprecise, loosely constructed. The dates are deceptive; the focus is on the period between 1550 and the 1680s, rather than the larger scope suggested. Critics have faulted it for its superficial generalizations and its lack of original and up-to-date scholarship. And readers of *The Whig Interpretation* may find in it the typical symptoms of the Whig fallacy: foreshadowings, anticipations, and other present-minded evocations of the scientific revolution. But the public response was favorable, and the book became, and still remains (in the revised edition published in 1957), a standard work in the discipline of the history of science that Butterfield helped to create and to popularize.

George III, Lord North and the People was an entirely different kind of book, and Butterfield's only long scholarly work apart from *The Peace Tactics of Napoleon* twenty years earlier. Like the earlier study, it had a narrow focus, eight months (or eighteen, if the background material is included). Within that time frame, it did bear out Butterfield's thesis: liberty was not the result of the intentions or the policies of the protagonists, but rather the unwitting outcome of the struggle between the king and the aristocracy. Yet the reviews were generally unfavorable, complaining, once again, of a lack of knowledge of current literature and research.

These scholarly works were almost interludes in a career that depended not on scholarship but on larger, amorphous reflections in which history provided the context—or, it sometimes seemed, the pretext—for pronouncement about public affairs. Whatever scholars thought of them, Butterfield's books were re-issued in America as well as in England, and some were translated into half a dozen languages (*Christianity and History* into Chinese as well). His status as a "public intellectual" was secure, even as historians carped about his history.

On a lecture tour in Germany in 1950, his first visit to that country after the war, he repeated his standard message: the most universal and the most dangerous sin was "human presumption and particularly intellectual arrogance." He "comforted" the Germans, McIntire says, by assuring them that all histories were distorted by the perennial temptation of present-mindedness, so that they need not think that Nazism was rooted in their past. He was not as comforting to his own countrymen. He blamed them, as much as the Germans, for both world wars. He recalled that one of his students, a conscientious objector exempted from military service, was so appalled by Hitler's invasion of Norway in 1940 that he enlisted and died in naval service. "I have wondered sometimes," Butterfield reflected, "what his reaction would have been if he had lived to know that Great Britain had had a prior intention of invading Norway—and this even irrespective of the desire to help Finland—and that Hitler, initially unwilling to undertake the adventure, had decided to forestall us." Later, endorsing A. J. P. Taylor's view that Hitler did not start World War II (at least not when it did start), he told an interviewer: "The fact that Taylor fails to condemn Hitler doesn't worry me; it sounds priggish but I don't think passing judgment is in the province of a technical historian. I think that's God's job, that's God's history—though I don't personally like the term."

Some commentators have suggested that Butterfield was "soft" on Hitler and Nazism because he regarded Stalin and communism as the greater enemy. In fact, he applied the same principles of political neutrality and moral equivalence to both. In *Christianity and History*, he praised Stalin for reclaiming Marxism from "the laboratories of the sociologists and economists" and restoring it to the narrative of real history, "a narrative about people—even about national heroes." Communism, he granted, was associated with "unbelief, atrocities, persecution, and aggression," but so was democracy in the period of the French Revolution. From a diplomatic point of view, the Soviet Union was not very different from what it would have been if the regime were a czarist one or a democracy, because "the general predicament would have been much the same." Butterfield could even imagine himself "a Stalin feeling that the other party, or that the whole predicament, has goaded me into blockading Berlin."

By this time the Cold War was well under way, and Butterfield's argument against anti-communism became a major theme of his lectures not only in England but in the United States (where it went down well with the American left, as McIntire observes) and in the Soviet Union (where it must have been equally pleasing to communists). *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* in 1953 was his most extensive criticism of this latest "war of righteousness." After 1940, he said, the British had "produced a situation in which Hitler could not consolidate himself or restore normality, but had to be forever on the move." Now that situation was being repeated in respect to Russia (as he generally referred to the Soviet Union), with ideology—anti-communist ideology, now—once again threatening to undermine the international order.

Just as "anti-Nazis become too much like Nazis," Butterfield asserted, so "anti-communists [become] too like communists, in their angers and hatreds and indignations." Many of the evils seen in the Russian system had nothing to do with the communist ideal but were rather "organic to the phenomenon of revolution as such." Moreover, that ideal—egalitarianism or the classless society—was itself a Christian and Western product and was already contributing to the "Westernization" of the world. In any case, once the revolutionary stage of communism was passed, in other countries as well as in Russia, communism itself would be as normal and legitimate a part of the internation-

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al order as Anglo-Saxon democracy.

Here, too, Butterfield displayed a nice sense of equivalence—this time being equally tolerant of communism and Nazism. If he sometimes sounded, as McIntire says, "like an apologist for the Soviets," he also occasionally sounded like an apologist for the Nazis. In 1953, it might be argued, the enormity of Stalinism had not yet fully emerged. But one could hardly say the same of Nazism. By then the nature of totalitarianism and the facts of the Holocaust had been dramatically exposed, so that Butterfield's suggestion that Hitler should be given the opportunity to "consolidate himself or restore normality" could mean only a consolidation of tyranny and the restoration of the "normality" of genocide. (In *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* the word "Holocaust" appeared only once, applied not to the fate of Jews but rather to a war against communism that would be "a mere holocaust.") Nor was Butterfield inclined, as late as 1960, to be any less conciliatory toward the Soviet Union—this well after Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin and after the suppression of the uprisings in Poland and Hungary, which had led to the disaffection of many prominent English communists, E. P. Thompson among them.

When Butterfield assumed the mantle of historian during these years, it was not history proper that occupied him but historiography. *Man on His Past*, published in 1955 (again a series of lectures repeated as radio talks), is impressively erudite on such subjects as the German historical school of the late eighteenth century and of Ranke and Acton in the nineteenth. The book also has the distinction of being one of his few footnoted works. Yet it, too, received mixed reviews, with critics complaining of its repetitiousness, lack of focus even within a single essay let alone in the book as a whole, and assertions about "technical" or "scientific" history that were vague and unsubstantiated. Still, it did have the virtue of reminding Butterfield's colleagues, and the public, that even as he made the rounds of the lecture circuit and delivered his radio talks, he did so with the authority of the professional historian.

Another book on historiography, *George III and the Historians*, which appeared two years later, was less successful

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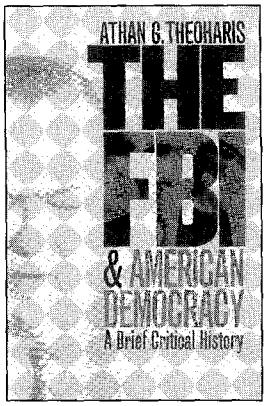

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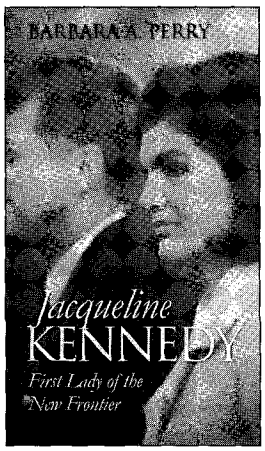

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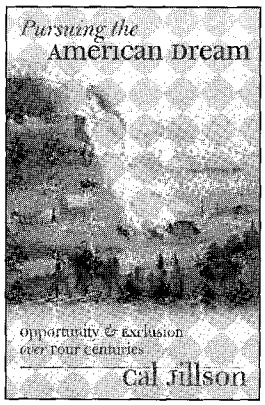

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in confirming Butterfield's reputation as a historian. A pastiche of lectures and reviews, it was memorable mainly because of its attack on Lewis Namier, the foremost historian of eighteenth-century parliamentary history, thus Butterfield's rival on that subject. It is ironic to read his criticism of Namier's concept of the "structure" of politics when one recalls his own essay not so many years earlier praising Marxism for a "structural" analysis that was preferable to conventional narrative history. Now he found the idea of structure faulty precisely because it displaced narrative history. He also criticized Namier and his followers for belittling the "ideas and purposes" of politicians, which is what he himself did when he made "Providence" and "predicaments," rather than ideas and purposes, the determinant forces of history.

The reviews of *George III and the Historians* were almost uniformly critical, some very sharply so. Even more damaging than the charges of inaccuracy, exaggeration, and inconsistency was the evidence of serious misquotations, one of which Butterfield had to acknowledge publicly in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Privately, he confessed that he had "made more howlers than I knew about." The episode, McIntire concludes, was a "disaster." Yet once again Butterfield emerged, if not quite intact, at least not seriously wounded. After Namier's death in 1960, the BBC called twice upon Butterfield for authoritative commentaries on him, whereupon Butterfield, after some dutiful expressions of praise, took the occasion to repeat his criticisms and to suggest that Namier had misspent his professional life by directing the kind of parliamentary research that he did.

IN RETROSPECT, IT WOULD SEEM that Butterfield had an enchanted career. By the usual standards of historical scholarship, he produced no great work of history, certainly nothing like the "technical" history that he acclaimed as the only true kind of history. Yet in addition to being the professor of modern history at Cambridge, he became master of Peterhouse in 1954, president of the Historical Association that same year, vice chancellor of the university in 1959, and reached the height of his profession in 1963 as the Regius professor of modern history. The final public seal of approval came with his knighthood in 1968, at which time Sir Herbert resigned both as master of Peterhouse and as Regius professor.

The subtitle of McIntire's book is "Historian as Dissenter," and the theme of "dissent" appears as a refrain throughout—uppercased to refer to Butterfield's Methodist faith, and lowercased to suggest the contrariness that manifested itself in his political and even personal life. It was as Dissenter, in the first sense of the word, that he affirmed Christianity as a religion not of "nebulous love and mere sentimental good fellowship," but as a transforming spiritual force. Revelation, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, he insisted, were not only historical facts, "events in time," but also had an extra dimension "capturing into time a portion of eternity." Toward the end of his life he confessed in his journal that the desire to "preach the Gospel," though it was sometimes "submerged," had been his "most constant motor." If it was not evident in his "technical" works of history (on the peace tactics of Napoleon or the career of Fox), it was conspicuous in his constant reminders that all men are sinners, in

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his repeated invocations of Providence, and in his tormented preoccupation with the relationship of Christianity to history, a subject he never satisfactorily resolved.

But Butterfield was less obviously a lowercase dissenter in his personal life. The Yorkshire working-class scholarship student was happy, indeed eager, to become a full-fledged member of the academic and social establishments. He readily accepted lecture invitations at home and abroad, employed a literary agent, was entrepreneurial in his dealings with publishers, and subscribed to not one but two clipping services (keeping scrapbooks of the clippings). He was disappointed not to have received the Regius professorship earlier, and was delighted when he was named master of Peterhouse ("If I die tonight, I shall have been Master of my college"), and was more pleased with his knighthood than all the other honors he had received.

Nor were all his political views as heretical as they might appear. It did not take much courage to be pro-appeasement in the 1930s, or anti–Cold War, anti-Vietnam, anti–nuclear armament, or anti-anti-communist in the 1950s and 1960s; these were the all-too-familiar staples of the academy. His "neutrality" toward Germany during the war and even after the war was more daring, but even this did not hurt him professionally. Nor is the term dissent especially relevant to his lectures and writings on other subjects—except perhaps in the ironic sense that he often seemed to be dissenting from himself as much as from everyone else. The historian John Kenyon observed of Butterfield's obituary of Namier on the BBC: "It was a typical Butterfield performance, each paragraph canceling out the one before." Noel Annan exposed the many assertions and counter-assertions in a single lecture by Butterfield on the subject of universities, and judged his writings on Christianity and history of "such Delphic ambiguity that attentive readers were baffled." Acknowledging the "dualities" and "polarities" ubiquitous in his work, McIntire concludes that this too was part of his "pervasive commitment to sheer dissent."

And yet Butterfield deserves still to be remembered as the author of *The Whig Interpretation of History*. That book remains, for all its flaws, a valuable corrective to some of the dominant modes of history today. A generation initiated by it into the discipline of history read it as an exhortation to try to recapture the past in all its concreteness, complexity, contingency, and particularity—a "pastness" as free from the taint of present-mindedness as was humanly possible. It did not occur to us that this would mean belittling the moral facts of the past—the events, the policies, and the ideas that defined the moral character of a person, a regime, or a period, and which were surely as much the reality of history as politics, economics, geography, demography, or whatever other facts the historian might think pertinent.

We were fully aware of how difficult it would be to meet this challenge without falling into the "Whig fallacy." What we did not then realize was how little Butterfield himself faced up to that challenge. Perhaps what is needed today is not the revival of a "proto-Butterfield," who was so suspicious of moral judgments as to ignore or belie the moral facts of history, nor a "deutero-Butterfield," who all too fleetingly, and regretfully, lapsed into an occasional moral sentiment or judgment, but a "neo-Butterfield," who can truly appreciate the "romance" of history—which is to say, the moral as well as political "predicaments" confronting statesmen, peoples, and historians as well. ■

Jacob S. Hacker
After Welfare

AMERICAN DREAM: THREE WOMEN, TEN KIDS, AND A NATION'S DRIVE TO END WELFARE
By Jason DeParle
(Viking, 422 pp., $25.95)

IN 1994, REPUBLICANS IN California distributed a voter-education pamphlet titled "The Welfare Mess." On its cover was a vivid montage of ghetto pathology: food stamps intermixed with hundred-dollar bills, drug paraphernalia alongside a snub-nosed pistol. Inside, the pamphlet catalogued welfare's pernicious effects. Teen pregnancy, runaway crime, moral decay, even falling SAT scores—all were blamed on a welfare system run amok. The pamphlet closed with a dire warning: "If You Don't Vote, THEY WIN."

Today the Republican Party that dramatically seized Congress in 1994 has a near-stranglehold on power. It runs all three branches of government, it holds a majority of governorships, and it is led by the most conservative president to occupy the modern Oval Office. And yet the anti-welfare jeremiads that the right once so effectively employed are gone. The "d-words" once on every conservative's lips—"dependence," "deviance," "dysfunction"—are virtually unspoken. George W. Bush has governed mostly from the right, but he ran for office as a "compassionate conservative," barely mentioning welfare. Since September 2002, the welfare reform bill that congressional Republicans engineered and President Clinton signed in 1996 has been up for congressional renewal, but almost no one outside of a narrow circle of politicos and policymakers is paying attention.

It is an odd and improbable development—one of the most wrenching and divisive issues in America wiped clean from the slate of our politics like scribbling from a chalkboard. Yet it is perhaps no more odd or improbable than the fact that a fiscally tiny program with an unobjectionable title ("Aid to Families with Dependent Children") and a clientele that never exceeded 6 percent of the population became liberalism's symbolic beachhead and conservatives' poster child for everything wrong with American social policy.

For decades, welfare took on an outsize importance in public debate. (In a notorious poll in 1994, Americans identified the program—which, at its peak, had a federal price tag of roughly $14 billion, or less than one-twentieth the expenditures of Social Security—as one

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of the two largest items in the federal budget.) It was the prism through which all discussions of economic disadvantage eventually passed, refracting even sympathetic analyses into decrepit inner cities and their dispossessed, dangerous, largely dark-skinned residents. In the wake of welfare reform, however, welfare is scarcely on the agenda at all. Nor, for that matter, is economic disadvantage. From a tiny program that earned the ire of every ideological viewpoint, welfare has become just a tiny program—drained of the rancor and conflict, but also of the larger questions about opportunity, assistance, and obligation that our nation's leaders, now more than ever, should be asking.

IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THIS way. When welfare reform passed and the welfare rolls unexpectedly plummeted—falling, by 2001, to less than half their 1994 high—liberals saw a silver lining in the clouds. Welfare reform was neither the abject disaster many of them feared nor the unmitigated triumph their opponents celebrated. It was instead an opportunity to shift assistance toward the one group that all sides agreed deserved help: the working poor. Without the burden of stigma, the assumption of indolence, the taint of crime, America's anti-poverty efforts would take a new direction—a direction signaled by Clinton's massive expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for those who "work hard and play by the rules" but still have trouble making ends meet. Out of the ashes of reform would emerge a re-invigorated debate about how best to help working families cope with the hardships and the uncertainties of an increasingly insecure economy.

Perhaps that was too much to expect. Perhaps it was forestalled by Bush's assumption of the presidency. Yet tracing the eight years since welfare reform, one cannot help but be struck by the near-silence that has trailed in its wake. In August, the Census Bureau announced that nearly one-fifth of children were poor in 2003, poverty rates had climbed for a third straight year, and a record 45 million Americans lacked health insurance. No one other than a few activists seemed to notice. It is as if we could speak of the dark passages in the American narrative of advancement only by talking about the horrors of welfare. Now, with the debate over welfare cut down to a size more in line with the program's true importance, we have no language for speaking of problems that neither welfare's demise nor welfare's continuance could ever be expected to solve.

It is one of the many virtues of Jason DeParle's beautifully written book that it forces us to confront these problems anew. DeParle has produced a model journalistic account of the genesis and the aftermath of welfare reform. His important volume is many things at once: an inside account of reform's enactment; a case study of one pioneering state, Wisconsin; and the biographies of three welfare beneficiaries—all living in Milwaukee, all black, all descended from the same enslaved ancestor—who found themselves suddenly confronted with a transformed system. In DeParle's drama, the lives of these three women—Angie, Jewell, and Opal—and their multiple children and their rotating boyfriends take center stage. And not without reason: their experiences are traumatic, frustrating, and often, because of the self-destructiveness the women routinely exhibit, infuriating.

To his great credit, DeParle wants his book to be more than an unvarnished account of inner-city life. He wants it to be a chronicle of a program's rise and fall that illuminates the choices and challenges the world's richest nation confronts as it grapples with its perennial poverty problem. Yet in trying to carry off this larger hat trick, DeParle comes up short. The stories he tells cannot bear the weight of the questions he asks. Like the struggle over welfare itself, DeParle's book passes before us as a series of vivid stories and images in which welfare ultimately looms far larger than its power to shape the American economy or social structure warrants. The more we see of the twisted lives of DeParle's subjects, the less we seem to understand the massive policy transformation in which they were caught—or its meaning for the future of our country's social policies.

WELFARE'S PROMINENT PLACE in American public debates always owed more to its symbolic power than to its programmatic impact. Welfare was like a Rorschach test in which each side saw what it wanted: a stingy system that didn't do enough to lift Americans onto the ladder of opportunity, a permissive system that failed to uphold basic social norms. For a program more studied than perhaps any other social policy, statistics took a backseat to stories in discussions of welfare's effects. There were Ronald Reagan's "welfare queens" living royally while popping out illegitimate kids. There were Newt Gingrich's "twelve-year-olds having babies" and "seventeen-year-olds dying of AIDS." There were tales of broken homes, drug addiction, reckless sexuality, and rampant fraud and abuse.

Little was new in these representations, or in their power to provoke. From the origins of the modern welfare system in the late 1930s—when the sympathetically viewed white widows who had been the original justification for welfare became the responsibility of the federal Social Security Board rather than state welfare offices—the stories of pathology and fraud remained remarkably constant, if less overtly racist. According to Michael K. Brown in *Race, Money, and the American Welfare State*, the anti-welfare rhetoric of the early postwar years already contained all the familiar themes: illegitimacy, dependence, corruption, sex. Few critics went as far as one smear sheet circulating in New York City in the early 1960s with the heading "Uncle Sam: Black Bastard Breeder Supreme." But there was little in the contemporary cries of welfare's critics that was not presaged in a 1963 report on welfare by the New Jersey State Legislature that condemned the "amoral existence of many [welfare] recipients" who maintained "illicit relationships with men of shadowy existence" and "beget illegitimate child after child without apparent remorse or guilt."

In the face of this hellish portrait, the left did what it does best: conducted new research. In the 1980s, the Harvard economists David Ellwood and Mary Jo Bane—the first of whom would design President Clinton's ill-fated welfare reform plan, the second of whom would resign from her position at the Department of Health and Human Services when Clinton signed the Republicans' far more punitive version two years later—conducted a series of studies to assess the charges. All of them showed that the criticisms were overblown or outright false. Did welfare cause out-of-wedlock births? No, welfare played at most a bit part in the process of changing family structure. What about the tales of lifelong dependence? Mainly trumped up. Most families were on welfare for short peri-

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ods of time, though the long-term beneficiaries made up a considerable portion of the rolls at any point. Had welfare made poverty worse? Hardly. The problem was not that the benefits created poverty; it was that they were so low and spottily distributed that they lifted few people out of poverty.

The research showing that welfare's critics were playing fast and loose with the facts was innovative, rigorous, and widely cited. It was also largely beside the point. For all the social-science trappings of the assault on welfare, the critics were not carefully sifting through the evidence. They were telling a story—one much more straightforward and compelling than the complex rebuttals that followed. What the left was lacking wasn't supportive data. It was an equally powerful portrayal of the less advantaged and society's obligations to them.

THERE WAS ONE GROUP OF welfare watchers that found the story-driven character of the welfare debate vastly more congenial than the mind-numbing probing of data: American reporters. Journalists were not attracted to welfare because they shared the right's animus toward it. They were merely looking for powerful stories—and stories about welfare, crime, and drugs were certainly powerful.

The journalistic gold rush consisted of two distinct migrations—the first small and painfully self-conscious of its effects on those it chronicled; the second huge and blithely unaware. The first subgroup also constituted a true genre: the journalist in the ghetto. Its specialty was gritty narratives of inner-city peril and pluck that allowed well-off, well-educated readers to slum vicariously and well-off, well-educated reviewers to effuse with words like "unflinching," "heartfelt," and "raw." With roots in Upton Sinclair and Michael Harrington, and exemplified by the work of Jonathan Kozol (and, more recently, the fine reportage of Adrian Nicole LeBlanc and Katherine Boo), this vein dripped sympathy for its subjects. The problem was that in its single-minded focus on impoverished minorities and its general eschewal of moral judgment and policy context, it often ended up reinforcing as many stereotypes as it dismissed.

But the journalist in the ghetto was only a bit player in the media feeding frenzy that descended on urban America in the 1980s—and like many of the

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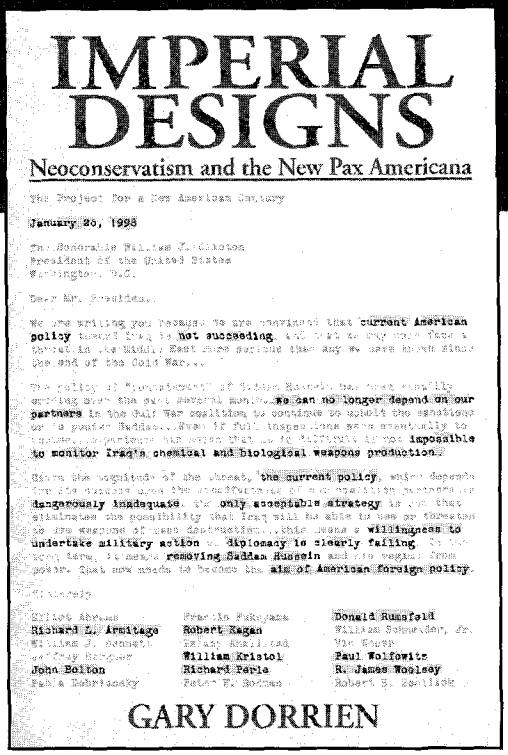

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stories that the genre produced, it was hardly a representative subculture. The more powerful assault came from television reporters, and this onslaught had no greater motive than the pursuit of ratings. During the 1980s, journalistic conventions were changing, as deregulation, competition for audience share, and flashy cable upstarts pushed local news toward shock-provoking, "reality"-style reporting. For local network affiliates battling for market dominance, "If it bleeds, it leads" became the unspoken mantra. And though welfare did not bleed, its recipients sadly did. The stories of drive-by shootings and drug violence that jammed the headlines and local news seemed a daily reminder of the hopelessness of urban America, the abject failure of government, the perverse effects of assistance.

They were also a daily reminder to middle America that welfare was a program for others. Most Americans, after all, do not receive welfare directly, nor do they come into regular contact with people they know receive it. Their images of the program are filtered to them through shared understandings, informal conversations, and especially media portrayals. And those portrayals are grossly distorted. In 1999, the political scientist Martin Gilens, in *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, found that the biggest distortions concern race: African Americans dominate media images of poverty. Making up roughly one-third of the poor, blacks constituted almost 70 percent of the pictures of the poor in news stories in the years before welfare reform, and in stories about the "underclass" they constituted 100 percent. Perhaps not surprisingly, Gilens found that what best explained white Americans' views of welfare was not their income or ideology. It was their assumptions about blacks. When asked to rate their willingness to cut welfare on a 100-point scale, whites who most agreed with the statement "blacks are lazy" were fully 40 points more favorable toward cuts than those who least agreed. Millions of Americans otherwise sympathetic to social programs saw black when they thought of welfare—and red when they thought of inner-city blacks living high on the taxpayers' dime.

JASON DEPARLE IS A JOURNALIST—one of the nation's best. And he is clearly comfortable with the storytelling methods of the craft. "Perhaps no three people can fully tell the story of 9 million," DeParle says up front of Angie, Jewell, Opal, and the millions who have left the welfare rolls—an admission more notable for the "perhaps" than for the incontrovertible fact that follows it. But no matter: DeParle largely ignores his own warning. Every twist and turn of welfare, every theory about the causes and consequences of dependence, every gloss—liberal or conservative—put on welfare reform, DeParle dutifully digs out of the lives of the three women whom he follows. As the book rolls on, the cumulative effect is oddly desensitizing. We are inundated with images, pressed again and again into anger or despair, but the scenes and emotions add up to less and less. The book ends finally not with a verdict on reform but with a poem written by Angie, which itself closes with a series of unanswered questions. It is a fitting conclusion to an inconclusive book.

Perhaps the closest that DeParle comes to a big argument is his insistence that, in his story of welfare, welfare really is not the story. "Paradoxically," he writes, "the closer I got to the welfare story, the less central welfare appeared." It is never exactly clear what DeParle means by this. That welfare recipients never survived on welfare alone? Certainly, few who received welfare could get by, or did get by, without supplementing their income. Most beneficiaries worked *before* welfare reform; they simply worked in the informal economy where their labor and their earnings were hidden. But DeParle's point seems more fundamental. As the book's title implies, he wants to show that the biographies of Angie, Jewell, and Opal cast light on something larger and deeper: the realities of the "American dream."

In the opening to the book, DeParle waxes eloquent about the final Senate debate over welfare reform:

> The senators were talking about welfare the way people talk of it at dinner tables, in terms so ideological as to be virtually religious. They were talking of how their parents and grandparents had made it. (Or hadn't. Or couldn't.) They were talking of how their communities would care for the poor. (Or didn't. Or wouldn't.) At times, it seemed that the very idea of America was on trial. We live in a country rich beyond measure, yet one with unconscionable ghettos. We live in a country where everyone can make it; yet generation after generation, some families don't. To argue about welfare is to argue about why. I'll be pleased if this story challenges, and informs, the assumptions on both sides as much as it has challenged my own.

To "challenge" and "inform" are worthy goals. The problem is, by challenging and informing us through the singular stories of three troubled women, DeParle brings us little closer to the answers we need. We find out how conflicted the lives of the inner-city poor are, how resilient these women and their children have to be to deal with the forces pushing them to and fro, how the debate over whether the poor are victims of the system or architects of their own fate misses the mix of fortune and failure that defines most of their lives. We even learn how pleasurable it is to smoke crack. What we do not find out is what all this means for the American dream.

DEPARLE WRITES AS IF THE problem of poverty amid plenty were a mystery. But among students of social policy, there is actually little dispute about why so many more people are poor in the United States than in other nations. The answer is simple: our government does much less to lift people out of poverty. A striking finding of the growing body of cross-national statistics on poverty and inequality is that the United States really does not stand out that much on either measure when government taxes and spending are removed from the picture. Put another way, if all the governments of rich democracies suddenly agreed to do nothing to redistribute income, American levels of poverty and inequality would be only modestly higher than the levels found in comparably affluent countries. The reason why American levels of poverty and inequality are in fact much, much higher is that our poverty-reduction efforts are singularly parsimonious and ineffective.

Such comparative reflections may seem beyond the scope of a book on the American welfare system. But DeParle has promised to illuminate the wider vistas of his story. And he does make a heroic attempt to review the growing body of studies evaluating welfare reform. Yet the answers that these studies

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provide about the millions who left the rolls are not answers to the larger question about opportunity that DeParle poses. It may once have sufficed to treat welfare and poverty as largely synonymous, though even at its peak welfare failed to reach nearly half of poor families. With the massive drop in the rolls, however, focusing just on those who receive welfare or leave it behind misses more and more of the lived experience of low-income Americans. What about the millions who face hardship but do not ever consider entering a welfare office—who, work or no work, get by largely on their own? Are the gates of opportunity opening for them?

Nothing suggests that they are. The scholarship on social mobility is rife with controversy, but there is little disagreement about the basic picture: most lower-income Americans remain in the bottom half of the income ladder for their entire adult lives; most higher-income Americans remain in the top half for their entire adult lives; the intergenerational transmission of poverty and wealth is quite high; and upward mobility has, if anything, grown slightly more elusive. There is also no dispute that inequality has increased, health insurance and other benefits have declined, and the job market has grown more uncertain. The massive exodus from the welfare rolls in the late-1990s boom and their failure to rise again in the recent downturn shows that those who relied on welfare are surprisingly capable of getting by without it. But the verdict on welfare reform is by no means the verdict on the American dream, and by treating the two as the same DeParle leaves out a huge range of considerations that would need to be grappled with to begin to cast judgment on the latter.

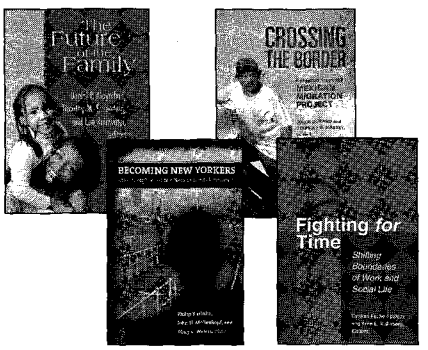
THERE IS ANOTHER CONTRADICTION at the heart of DeParle's account, and it has nothing to do with the individual stories that he tells. He has written a book designed to show that welfare is less important than we believe. Yet the whole book revolves around the genesis and the passage of the 1996 welfare reform bill—in a word, around welfare.

The contradiction is understandable. DeParle was the most prominent, and the most gifted, reporter on the welfare beat in the 1990s, when the big battles were being fought. And his experience shows: DeParle works mightily to make his biographies of Angie, Jewell, and Opal carry the book, but the narrative really crackles when he turns to Washington politics. No one else has captured so vividly or so concisely the confusing seesaw character of the struggle—Clinton's entry into the debate, his failure to move quickly, his eventual proposal released just months before the 1994 midterm elections, and then the huge rightward shift that followed and to which Clinton eventually acceded.

Although DeParle is sympathetic to Clinton's embrace of welfare reform in 1992, his portrait of Clinton (whom he interviewed at length for the book) is more devastating than any right-wing hatchet job could be. By pushing welfare reform to the ten-yard line and then egregiously fumbling the ball, Clinton opened the door not just to the Republican congressional takeover, DeParle suggests, but also to a much more draconian law that had much less chance of providing the support needed to move welfare recipients permanently into the workforce.

But conspicuously missing from this

SOCIAL SCIENCE THAT MATTERS



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saga of missteps and missed chances is one of its more important players: Jason DeParle. When Clinton took office, the young journalist was not so different from the gaggle of policy wonks who rushed to be part of what DeParle wonderfully dubs "a poverty nerd's Shangri-la." Occasionally, DeParle does slip into first-person recounting of his role as a reporter. Still, reading his account one would never suspect how central that role was. Between Clinton's inauguration in January 1993 and the Republican takeover in November 1994, DeParle wrote more than one hundred stories for the *Times*. And for the most part his stories were not positive. DeParle's specialty was the insider leak about thorny policy details—a story type made considerably more attractive by the fact that the Clinton administration leaked with abandon. Between January and March of 1994, he unleashed a series of bombshells—"Change in Welfare Is Likely to Need Big Jobs Program," "Welfare Plan May Require New Taxes," "Clinton Plan Sees Welfare Costing $6 Billion a Year"—that cemented his reputation as the welfare reporter closest to the inside.

DeParle's stories were good for his reputation. They were not nearly so good for the efforts of David Ellwood and others to try to craft a compromise. Many of the ideas that DeParle publicized were not meant to reach the light of day. They were options, waiting, like everything else, for Clinton's final word. But once they were out, the administration was forced either to deny them and look untruthful or to endorse them and make someone, or some group, very angry. DeParle reports that when a tax on gambling was proposed as a financing idea, "Senator Harry Reid (Democrat of, hmmm, Nevada) pledged, 'I will become the most negative, the most irresponsible, the most obnoxious person of anyone in the Senate.' " What he neglects to mention is that the reporter who broke the story of the gambling-tax idea was him. According to DeParle, the ongoing "spectacle" of pre-emptive stands against leaked ideas "didn't just delay the plan. It sealed its doom." If he is right, then it can be fairly said that DeParle played his own small part in sealing the plan's doom, too.

WHATEVER THE EFFECT OF DeParle's reporting, he is certainly right about one feature of Clinton's now-forgotten plan: it was light-years apart from what Republicans proposed and what Clinton signed. Indeed, DeParle's most telling reportage traces not the transformation in the lives of Angie, Jewell, and Opal, but the transformation in Democrats' positions. As the political scientist R. Kent Weaver argues in his richly detailed book *Ending Welfare as We Know It*, the shift was less a true Democratic conversion than a strategic response to a fluctuating political situation. Clinton's pledge to end welfare got the ball rolling in 1992. But the process was further propelled by Clinton's opportunistic "triangulation" between an increasingly conservative Republican leadership and his liberal party base in Congress.

The ideological shift is easy to forget today, when the modal Democratic stance on welfare is basically to let the 1996 law continue as is. But DeParle reminds us just how big it was. In the fall of 1994, as Republicans gained ground by pillorying welfare, Democratic Representative Bob Matsui was busy excoriating Ellwood for an unnecessarily harsh bill—even though it phased in work requirements and created public jobs of last resort. By the time Gingrich and his troops rolled into town, writes DeParle, "there were literally no Democratic alternatives. There were only competing Republican visions of what ending welfare would mean."

Today, these Republican visions are heralded for moving millions of families off the rolls and thus freeing up billions in federal and state dollars for child care and job placement. But the most appropriate way to judge the intentions of welfare reform's architects is on the basis of what they thought they were doing; and like their opponents, few of Gingrich's revolutionaries predicted the massive and largely painless drop in the rolls that ended up occurring. What they thought would happen is that the states, having been handed a fixed pot of money (so-called block grants) and strict new federal rules, would have to figure out how to implement the tough requirements mandated by the law within the confines of still-large caseloads.

Almost everyone in 1996 expected the clash of these aims to result in significant pain for many families; they just differed on how worthwhile that pain would be. They also differed on how important it was to provide supports to women and kids who leave welfare—millions of whom, even when the states were awash with money, found themselves without health insurance or child care when they exited the rolls. Clinton's original vision of welfare reform had two parts: "two years and you're off" and "make work pay." The post-1994 progress of reform saw the embrace of ever-stricter versions of the first goal and increasing silence about the second.

IN TRACING THE MUTATION OF CLINTON'S ambiguous pledge to "end welfare as we know it" into a specific system of block grants, time limits, caps, and cutoffs, DeParle is an acute reporter. But while accurately capturing the shift, he fails to ask the question that is perhaps most relevant to future developments: was the bill that ultimately passed what the American people wanted? DeParle rarely mentions voters or the public, and he cites scarcely a single survey. As a result, his book inadvertently reinforces the same easy verdict that most have drawn out of the welfare reform experience—that Americans are, by and large, hostile to government attempts to address social problems and simply don't care about poverty, inequality, or hardship.

But this is the wrong conclusion. In all of the vast research on public views about social policy, the one finding that comes out clearly is that welfare is sui generis. Americans express high support for nearly every public social program and social policy goal—except welfare. Even in abstract terms, large majorities of the public say that government should help people who have bad luck or who cannot help themselves. During the debate over welfare reform, Clinton was convinced that spending more on welfare was the fastest road to political ruin. But if so, the barrier he faced was not the public: polls throughout the debate showed that Americans expected and were willing to spend more to help move welfare recipients into the workforce.

To be sure, surveys can overstate public support. But in this case there is also ample historical evidence that Americans are willing to tolerate huge amounts of redistribution when the targets of aid are considered morally deserving and when programs limit the potential for abuse. Medicaid, the health program for the poor, grew from 1.4 percent of the federal budget in 1980 to more than 6 percent in 1994. It now pays for one in three hospital births, covers one-fifth of all chil-

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dren, and finances almost half of nursing home care. The Earned Income Tax Credit ballooned from a billion-dollar-a-year program in 1975 into the nation's largest program for the poor. In 2003, thanks to the huge expansion championed by Clinton a decade earlier, the annual credit averaged nearly $1,800 for each of the almost 20 million working-poor families that claimed it.

Even today, as the party in power substitutes economic happy talk for economic justice, there is little evidence that most Americans are buying what it's selling. Our nation's leadership has moved sharply to the right, jamming through two huge tax cuts skewed toward the rich; but when it comes to social policy, most Americans are probably pretty much where they were a decade ago. They are skeptical of government, and critical of those who fail to take responsibility for their own lives, but they broadly support efforts to help anyone with minimal gumption to achieve the American dream.

The lesson of the great welfare debate is not that Americans have no stomach for fighting poverty and insecurity. The lesson is that welfare was a terrible program shrouded in ugly associations and almost perfectly designed to push every public hot button—and Americans were willing to accept almost anything in its place. No one should be sanguine about the prospects for a renewed discussion of the dark shadows that still obscure the American dream for countless citizens. But the main obstacle to such a discussion is not the American people; it is the folks who are governing them. ■

Richard A. Posner
CSI: Baker Street

THE NEW ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES
By Arthur Conan Doyle
Edited by Leslie S. Klinger
(W. W. Norton, 1,300 pp., $75)

EDMUND WILSON ONCE SAID that "the reading of detective stories is simply a kind of vice that, for silliness and minor harmfulness, ranks somewhere between smoking and crossword puzzles." His dictum has been much on my mind in reading *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. The two volumes of this massive work collect in more than one thousand pages all the Sherlock Holmes stories; and a third volume, to be published next year, will contain the four novels. This curious publishing enterprise has been my introduction to a strange phenomenon with which I had previously been unacquainted: the cult of Sherlock Holmes. I read a number of the Holmes stories (plus *The Hound of the Baskervilles*) when I was a young teen, and while I remember enjoying them I have never been minded to read them again, though I have since read numerous detective and adventure stories by such avatars of Conan Doyle as Agatha Christie and John Buchan. I was unaware that the methods of detection ascribed to Sherlock Holmes might be thought in some quarters a model for forensic reasoning.

The pages in the new annotated Holmes (remarkably, it has two predecessors) are double-columned. The inner column contains Doyle's text; the outer, in smaller print, the notes, which would be footnotes if they were printed below rather than beside the text. The side-by-side format makes the text almost unreadable. At a guess, the notes are at least a quarter of the length of Doyle's text. It is therefore astonishing that the editor should state: "This is not a work for the serious student of Arthur Conan Doyle." But he is not being modest. The notes, apart from ones that merely record differences between different editions of the same story, are of two kinds. One (the more numerous) explains things that readers who know nothing about England, particularly Victorian England, might stumble over, such as the difference between a hansom and a landau or what the "Blue Ribbon Army" was (a temperance organization). These notes are well done, but there are too many of them. A reader who doesn't know what "mews," "Harris tweed," or "solicitor" means is not going to get very far in Sherlock Holmes; and there is no possible need for notes explaining what a Stradivarius is and who Paganini was.

The other kind of note presents conjectures, often fantastic, that proceed from the assumption that Holmes and Watson were real people, Watson being the Boswellian author of the stories and Doyle merely his literary agent. These notes speculate in sometimes tedious, sometimes hilarious detail about biographical data omitted from the stories, such as when Holmes was born, when (and whether) he died, whether he had a sex life, and what model of revolver Watson carries, the last being the subject of an entire appendix. Theories are spun to dispel the many inconsistencies among the stories, in the manner of a real biographer confronted by conflicting accounts of the person whose life he is writing. Actually, the inconsistencies among the Holmes stories are sometimes artistic liberties (as when, having killed Holmes off, Doyle decided to resurrect him and tried to give a plausible account of why Holmes had disappeared for the last three years if he had not been killed by Professor Moriarty after all), but more often they are simply mistakes. Thus a note to "The Speckled Band" points out that the railroad timetables of the day reveal that Holmes's client could not have arrived at Baker Street as early as she did from her home near Leatherhead. The note speculates that Watson (the nominal author of the Holmes stories, remember) changed the location of her home to protect her privacy but neglected to change the train times to conform.

The speculations reach a dizzying crescendo in regard to "The Final Problem," the story in which Holmes and Moriarty plunge to their presumed deaths in the Reichenbach Falls. Suggestions for what really happened include: "Holmes staged the entire affair to obtain a three-year rest-cure for his drug addiction"; "Holmes imagined Moriarty and travelled to the falls bent on suicide"; "Moriarty was invented by

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Holmes to explain his lack of success in an increasing number of cases; Holmes's ego would not allow him to admit that ordinary criminals had outsmarted him, so he invented a master criminal"; Moriarty eluded Holmes and "subsequently achieved moral rehabilitation and, assuming the name J. Edgar Hoover, pursued a career in law enforcement in the United States."

Omissions in a fictional character's biography can give rise to genuine interpretive puzzles. How many children has Lady Macbeth? The play doesn't say. And this is distinctly odd. If she has no children, why is Macbeth troubled at the thought that Banquo's progeny rather than his own will become kings of Scotland? But if she does have children, none of whom will inherit the throne, why is this fact, which certainly would have preyed on Macbeth given his dynastic ambitions, never mentioned? But the Sherlockians are not interested in literary interpretation; they want a consistent biographical account because they are committed to the pretense that Holmes, and Watson, and (less certainly) Moriarty, and the rest, are real people—including, on the strength of "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire," Count Dracula, for according to one Sherlockian, "Dracula and Moriarty were one and the same person, although Watson was unaware of the fact."

If further examples are needed to demonstrate the wildness of the Sherlockians' speculations, consider the claim that Irene Adler, the retired opera singer who figures in "A Scandal in Bohemia," had been "trained to become the first female rabbi," or that she had a tryst with Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls and "fell into the falls, perhaps committing suicide," or that she and Holmes had an affair that produced a son—the (fictional) detective Nero Wolfe. Needless to say, it has been argued, of course with no evidence, that Holmes and Watson had a homosexual relationship, and also that Holmes was a woman.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IS NOT THE first fictional character to give rise to a cult. But the others, such as Falstaff and Leopold Bloom, have tended to be likable, or at least lifelike, figures. Not icy, didactic, condescending, inhumanly self-sufficient, and therefore (the speculations concerning Irene Adler notwithstanding) sexless Sherlock—a social isolate, monologuist, and know-it-all, whose principal pleasure in life besides solving crimes is making a fool of his stooge, Dr. Watson. He treats Watson with no consideration, summoning him from his medical practice or his wife with a snap of the fingers to do drudge work, such as carrying a pistol. (Watson is Holmes's "muscle.") What is worse, Holmes assiduously endeavors to keep the poor man utterly clueless, so that, unable to close the intellectual chasm that yawns between them by even a hair's breadth, he shall remain ever abjectly worshipful of Holmes's genius. Rather than share insights with Watson as an investigation proceeds, so that Watson can play more than a flunky's role, Holmes keeps him in the dark until the very end of each story, when he reveals the solution to his awed companion. Holmes is God, Watson his congregation.

There is method in this from the author's standpoint: if Watson knew where an investigation was leading, this would not only dim Holmes's star but also help the reader to guess the solution to the crime puzzle. Doyle may also have misunderstood the nature of genius, specifically scientific genius; I will come back to that in a moment. My present point is only to register surprise, given Holmes's character, that there are so many Sherlock Holmes groupies and so many books, articles, and web pages dedicated to this absurd obsession.

There is a curious fracture in the Holmes stories. On the one hand, they are early and distinguished examples of the ingeniously plotted detective story—the genre perfected by Agatha Christie—where the point is to baffle the reader by scattering false clues and endowing the villain with fiendish cleverness. On the other hand, they are part of a recognizable Victorian-Edwardian genre of grown-up boys' books, the sort of thing one finds done to perfection in the best novels of H. Rider Haggard and John Buchan. Such books are written for men as well as older boys, but for men who have remained in touch, as it were, with their boyish selves. The heroes are physically strong, fearless and imperturbable, chivalrous, well-born, pure in heart (the young are idealistic), pitted against unmitigated evil (young people tend to see things in black-and-white terms), adept at disguises (which kids love), and homosocial (never homosexual—it's just that, like boys, the heroes of such books bond only with other males). All these are Sherlock Holmes's characteristics as well. His world-class antagonist, Moriarty, is a figure straight out of the boys' books: "He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them."

Unlike the Holmes stories, the boys' books tend to be set in exotic locales; but the exotic enters the Holmes stories in the form of the victims and the perpetrators of crime who come from abroad or are involved in the affairs of the British Empire, a distinct presence in the stories. The ratio of detection to action is of course higher, but still there is a deep affinity. (One critic has noted perceptively that the relationship between Holmes and Watson is modeled on that between the older and younger boys in English public schools.) This helps to explain the Holmes cult. Holmes is for the immature.

KNOWING LITTLE ABOUT THE cult of Sherlock Holmes, and having only a faint recollection of stories read a half-century ago, I naïvely believed that the publication of an annotated edition meant that the forensic methods depicted in the stories might hold some legal or philosophical interest. Sherlock himself is insistent that he owes his success in solving crimes to his scientific and logical methods. Among his other accomplishments, he is a trained chemist who conducts important scientific experiments when he is not investigating crimes. He tells Watson that the key to solving crimes is collecting and analyzing data, and that the difference between Watson and him is that Watson merely sees, but he observes.

Actually Holmes's methods are not scientific or logical, and they bear little resemblance to the methods used to investigate crimes. He employs none of the scientific tools of criminal investigation that were available in his time, unless a magnifying glass is considered a tool of science. A person who was scientific in his approach to solving crimes would have been guided by theories about the motives and the character of criminals, the demographic characteristics of the criminal class, the frequency of different

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sorts of crime, and the characteristic methods employed by the various types of criminal. Holmes has no such theories. Anyway, they would do him no good: the only crimes he investigates are ones that are sui generis. They are the only ones that can be relied on to baffle a reader of detective stories.

Such crimes can be solved only by the inspired guess. The villain in "The Speckled Band," Dr. Roylott, lived for many years in India, and, having a "passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent," had acquired for his English estate a cheetah and a baboon. Now, baboons happen not to be native to India, and this has given the cultists fits trying to explain away what is doubtless a simple error by a busy author. A note tells us that "either Dr. Roylott's 'Indian correspondent' was acquiring animals abroad or [another character's] identification of the animals is mistaken." The first suggested explanation is inconsistent with Roylott's passion for Indian animals and the second with the fact that Holmes and Watson see the baboon. Holmes guesses—correctly, of course—that if Roylott obtained two wild animals from India, maybe he obtained a third—a poisonous snake. This is not a logical or scientific demonstration, or even a product of careful observation; it is a shot in the dark.

THE STORIES WERE WRITTEN when England was still the world's leading scientific nation. Science had enormous prestige and fascinated the educated public, so Doyle was clever to cast Holmes as a scientific thinker. But really he is a caricature of a scientific thinker. He is cold-blooded, hyper-rational, and a complete loner, and he notices, and records in his memory, everything in his field of perception. These are not the defining characteristics of the real scientist. What defines scientific method is a commitment to confronting hypotheses with objective (that is, observer-independent) data that may falsify them. The detection of crime can be scientific in this sense. The detective may suspect someone, but he must be prepared to abandon the hypothesis of guilt if fingerprint evidence, DNA evidence, the reliable confession of someone else, or other persuasive evidence falsifies the hypothesis. Being unwilling to work with other people because you are too proud to accept assistance or because you despise their intelligence, and having a garbage-pail memory: those are not essential or even common characteristics of successful scientists.

The observational acuity of which Holmes is so proud is epistemic nonsense. Invariably upon first meeting a prospective client, Holmes will recite to an amazed Watson after the person leaves all that he learned about the person from the scuff marks on his shoes, the calluses on his fingers, and so forth; and this is taken as a sign of Holmes's perspicacity. The *reductio ad absurdum* is Holmes's wowing Watson by "deducing" that the window in Watson's bedroom is on the right side of the room from the fact that the left side of Watson's face is not shaven as smoothly as the right, implying that the sunlight was coming in from the right in the morning when he was shaving. But only if Watson was facing north—and no points of the compass are mentioned—would the window on his right be facing east and thus admitting the morning sunlight. And there's a deeper problem. The sun's position is irrelevant; the window just has to be to the right of the mirror as one faces it for the outside light to hit Watson's right cheek.

In the real world, when you meet a prospective client for the first time, you listen attentively to the client's story rather than study his person for features that almost certainly are irrelevant to the purpose of the encounter. Since we are here in a make-believe world, Holmes's random observations are always pertinent to his investigation except when adduced to demonstrate Holmes's genius, as in the case of Watson's asymmetric shaving. In real life they would be irrelevant, a distraction, a sign of vanity. There are a near-infinite number of data points in our visual and auditory fields, and you cannot take them all in at once, as Holmes claims to do. Holmes conceives of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, explaining in "The Cardboard Box" that "we approached the case, you remember, with an absolutely blank mind, which is always an advantage. We had formed no theories. We were simply there to observe and to draw inferences from our observations." But that is not how the mind works. There is always pre-selection: you notice the things that are relevant to some interest of yours. I have lived in the same house for thirty-five years and I have never noticed how many stairs there are between the basement and the first floor, the first floor and the second floor, and so on. This is not because I am unobservant; it is because I have no use for such knowledge.

The Holmes stories and the Holmes persona seem to me wildly overrated, and this annotated edition an eccentric venture, though no more so than the online worlds of which it is the print counterpart. People are entitled to their harmless obsessions, and one would have to be as humorless as Holmes himself not to smile at the vision of Moriarty morphing into J. Edgar Hoover. The further away in time we get from the Victorian era (most of the best Holmes stories were written in the 1890s), the more appeal the stories have as period pieces. The best of them, such as "The Red-Headed League," "The Speckled Band," "The Naval Treaty," and "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons," can still be recommended to American teenagers as entertaining introductions to Victorian England. But that's all. ■

THE MACHIAVELLIAN NEOCONSERVATIVES

Commentary

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Bob's Your Uncle

"FIGHT ON, MUGABE!" THE marchers chanted as they went round in a tight oval. It was the second day of the U.N. General Assembly's annual opening, a week when world leaders come to Manhattan, and some 60 men and women had gathered across the street to welcome one of the day's featured U.N. speakers, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. Some wore dreadlocks and dashikis, others wore black power T-shirts, and they all shook signs bearing Mugabe's unmistakable image: jaw set, eyes framed by thick glasses, fist clenched. These days, Mugabe has few friends in the world. You get ostracized when you steal elections, torture dissidents, and preside over economic collapse. But, to Mugabe's New York fan club, none of that matters. They see Zimbabwe's strongman as an inspiration and a victim of the foreign press, singled out for one reason: He has taken farms from his country's whites and redistributed the land to the black majority.

"WHOSE LAND?" A MAN CHANTED INTO a megaphone. "Our land!" the protesters shouted back. They were using the word "our" loosely. So far as I could tell, no one in Mugabe's welcoming committee was actually *from* Zimbabwe. They hailed from Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and East New York, and had learned about the rally from posters in historically black neighborhoods. I'd found out the same way. Passing an African-themed boutique in Brooklyn, I'd been startled to see Mugabe's face staring at me from a poster. THE PRESIDENT IS COMING, it proclaimed. I had to go. I recently spent two years in Africa, where Zimbabwe is a major story. Few Africans I met harbored any illusions about Mugabe. During the run-up to the Iraq war, African friends used to joke that Zimbabwe should be next. Of course, Mugabe has withstood intense diplomatic pressure to step down. Inside the United Nations, at the very moment his American fans were chanting his name, Mugabe was giving a typically defiant speech. "We are now being coerced to accept and believe that a new political-cum-religious doctrine has arisen," he was saying. "Namely that there is but one political god, George W. Bush."

IT'S A SAD DENOUEMENT FOR A MAN once hailed as Africa's great hope. Mugabe fought a long war to depose Ian Smith, the white supremacist ruler of the country then known as Rhodesia. After Mugabe won, he cast himself as committed to racial reconciliation, and Zimbabwe's economy boomed. But then Mugabe became a tyrant. He crushed a regional rebellion, killing 10,000 people. Corruption flourished. And, to quell growing unrest, Mugabe seized on a convenient enemy: white farmers, who still owned one-third of the country's farmland. Blacks moved onto white estates, forcing owners out. The land was parceled out, mostly to Mugabe's cronies. Yet this strategy carried devastating economic consequences. Food production plummeted, and many Zimbabweans now go hungry.

I WONDERED: WHO COULD DEFEND THIS? So, on the appointed afternoon, I made my way to Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza. A crowd was gathering. One Mugabe booster sidled up to me. A small, elderly man, he carried a large sign reading MUGABE IS RIGHT. I mentioned I had lived in Africa. "Tell me," he said, "what's it like there?" Then the chanting began. "Let's run the British to the sea," one man shouted, "so African land can be free!" I walked over to one organizer wearing a red, green, yellow, and black kerchief—the colors of Mugabe's party. He spoke with an American accent and declined to give his name. I asked if he had ever been to Zimbabwe. He shook his head no. "Talk to him," he said, jerking a thumb at a thin, bald man who introduced himself as Roger Wareham. Wareham leads the December 12 Movement, a group that has picketed Korean grocers in black neighborhoods and pushed the U.S. government to pay slavery reparations. He has visited Zimbabwe multiple times to show solidarity with the regime. "Mugabe was the darling of the Western countries," Wareham told me. "Then [he] went from angel to devil as far as the Western press is concerned."

A PASSING PROTESTER CAUGHT WAREham's eye. "Hi, mayor," he said cheerfully, greeting City Councilman Charles Barron, a barrel-chested man in a silk shirt. Barron is not mayor yet, but he is running for the Democratic nomination. Two years ago, he scandalized colleagues by inviting Mugabe to City Hall. At the rally, Barron promised that, if elected mayor, he'll up the ante by bringing the Zimbabwean leader to Gracie Mansion. "We're going to continue to be supportive [of Mugabe], no matter what anybody says," Barron told the crowd. After he was finished, I recounted to him the opening passage of journalist Robert Guest's recent book on Africa, which describes how an opposition party supporter was kidnapped by Mugabe's secret police and had his penis speared with a bicycle spoke. "Yeah," the councilman replied. "And they stuck a stick up Abner Louima's rectum in America." He added that it was his understanding that Mugabe tolerates "the largest opposition of any African leader." In fact, opposition to Mugabe is so large that his opponent would have won the last presidential election had it not been rigged.

THAT AFTERNOON IN NEW YORK, HOWever, the opposition was outnumbered. I returned to the rally to discover it had dissolved into chaos. Counter-protesters had arrived and unfurled banners for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Zimbabwe's largest opposition party. A shoving match had ensued. And Mugabe backers were now directing a photographer to take headshots of MDC supporters. "I said, 'Take my picture, send it to Robert Mugabe, tell him you saw me do this,' " said Handel Mlilo, an MDC supporter who, like all the counterdemonstrators, was actually from Zimbabwe. They were baffled to see Americans' passionate support for Mugabe. "I call this arrested ideological development," Mlilo said. "These people are living in the past. They have not been around the past twenty-four years to see how this man has deteriorated." His comrade Ishmael Mthombeni, 26, gestured at the marchers across the barricade: "I want to meet some Zimbabweans on *that* side," he said.

ANDREW RICE

Andrew Rice lived in Uganda for two years.

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Bill Clinton famously proclaimed that "the era of big government is over." He was wrong: it just moved to the suburbs. State and local governments now dwarf the national government. Fully 86 percent of civilian government employees work for state and local entities. That translates into 46 million Americans who either work for local governments or depend on someone who does.

By long-standing tradition, Americans prefer their government to be close to home, where ostensibly we can control it. We've got half our wish: most government is local, but it is out of control. Local governments are multiplying like rabbits, at a rate of one new entity added each day. They operate the schools our children attend, determine the uses of our property, and tax us at a higher rate than the national government.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. The founding fathers, fearing all government, created federalism not to aggrandize state governments but to protect individual liberty, presuming that government closer to the people could be trusted to guard those rights. As tyrannical state leaders violate liberty in the name of "states' rights," we discover that those who coined that term had it wrong. **States do not have rights. People have rights. And the purpose of federalism is to protect those rights.**

Grassroots tyranny usually afflicts the proverbial little guy. In Mesa, Arizona, Edward Salib owns a Winchell's Donut franchise and posts the company's signs in his store windows.

But Mesa ordered him to cease the advertising, citing an ordinance declaring that signs could only cover a certain percentage of a window (to protect the city's "aesthetics"). But the standard Winchell's advertising signs covered more than the allowed space. Salib asked if he could comply by leaving one window empty of signs. Not enough, the city responded.

Salib turned to the judicial system. Federal courts often strike down local laws when they violate freedom of speech—except when the speech is commercial. Although many people highly value commercial speech, the courts do not. Salib's challenge to Mesa's ordinance failed in the trial court and is now on appeal.

There are thousands of such stories. The typical person lacks the resources to take on local governments. The odds are further stacked by the politicians' ability to use their citizens' tax dollars against them. Even when people can stand up for themselves, they often encounter court systems that indulge every presumption in favor of local government power.

What can we do to fight the leviathan? First, we should pay attention. The school board member or zoning commissioner often has more impact on the lives of ordinary people than does the president of the United States. We should get to know local officials and expend as much effort on local politics as we do on national politics.

We also need to rediscover federalism. We must remember that the object of American constitutional government is the preservation of individual liberty and that government at every level is a constant threat to that liberty.

In terms of fighting grassroots tyranny, we should look to state constitutions. Many state constitutions provide greater protections of liberty than does their national counterpart.

Most important, we can fight back. Washington, D.C., remains an object of concern for those who value freedom. But the more dangerous bully may live closer than we think. Only by standing up against it can we hope to vindicate our own freedom and cause government officials to act like the public servants they are meant to be.

—Clint Bolick

Clint Bolick is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. This essay is adapted from his new book Leviathan: The Growth of Local Government and the Erosion of Liberty *(Hoover Press, 2004).*

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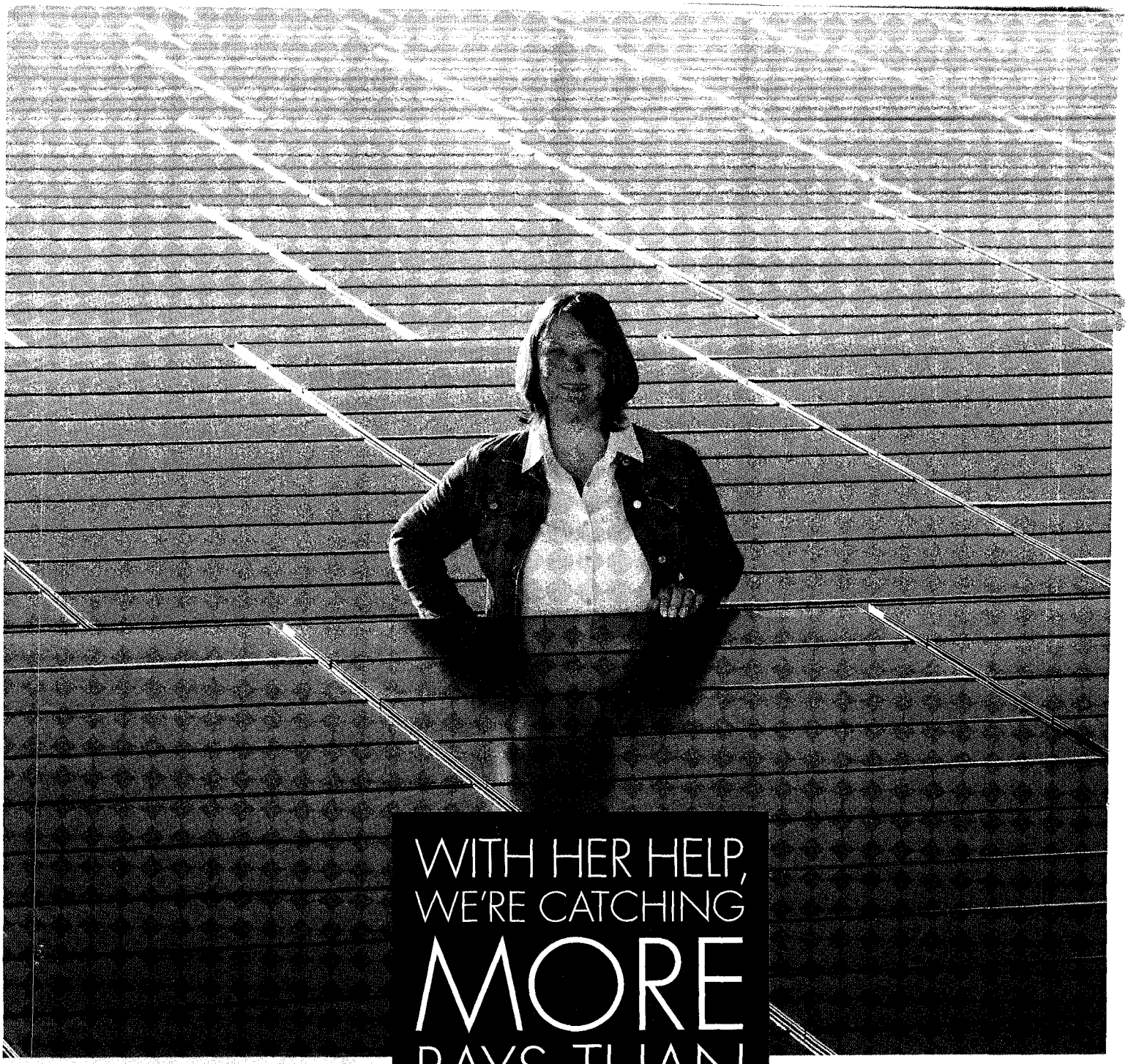

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